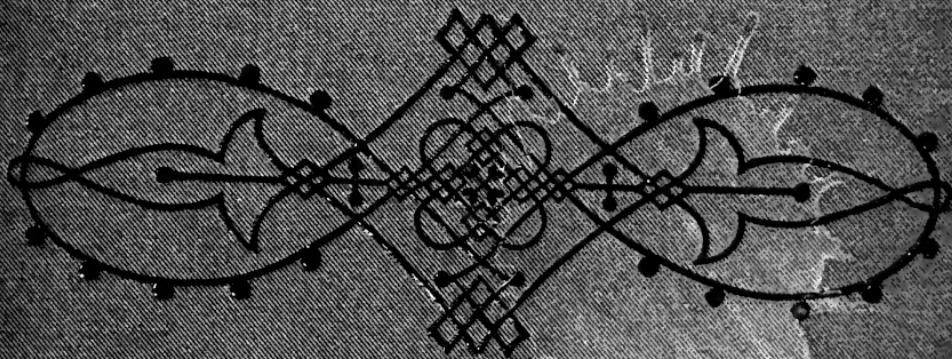
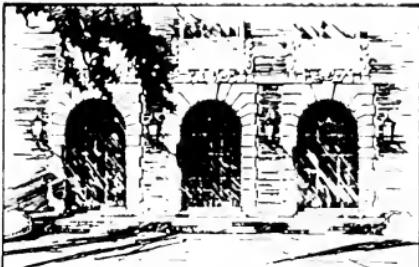


HUGH MOORE

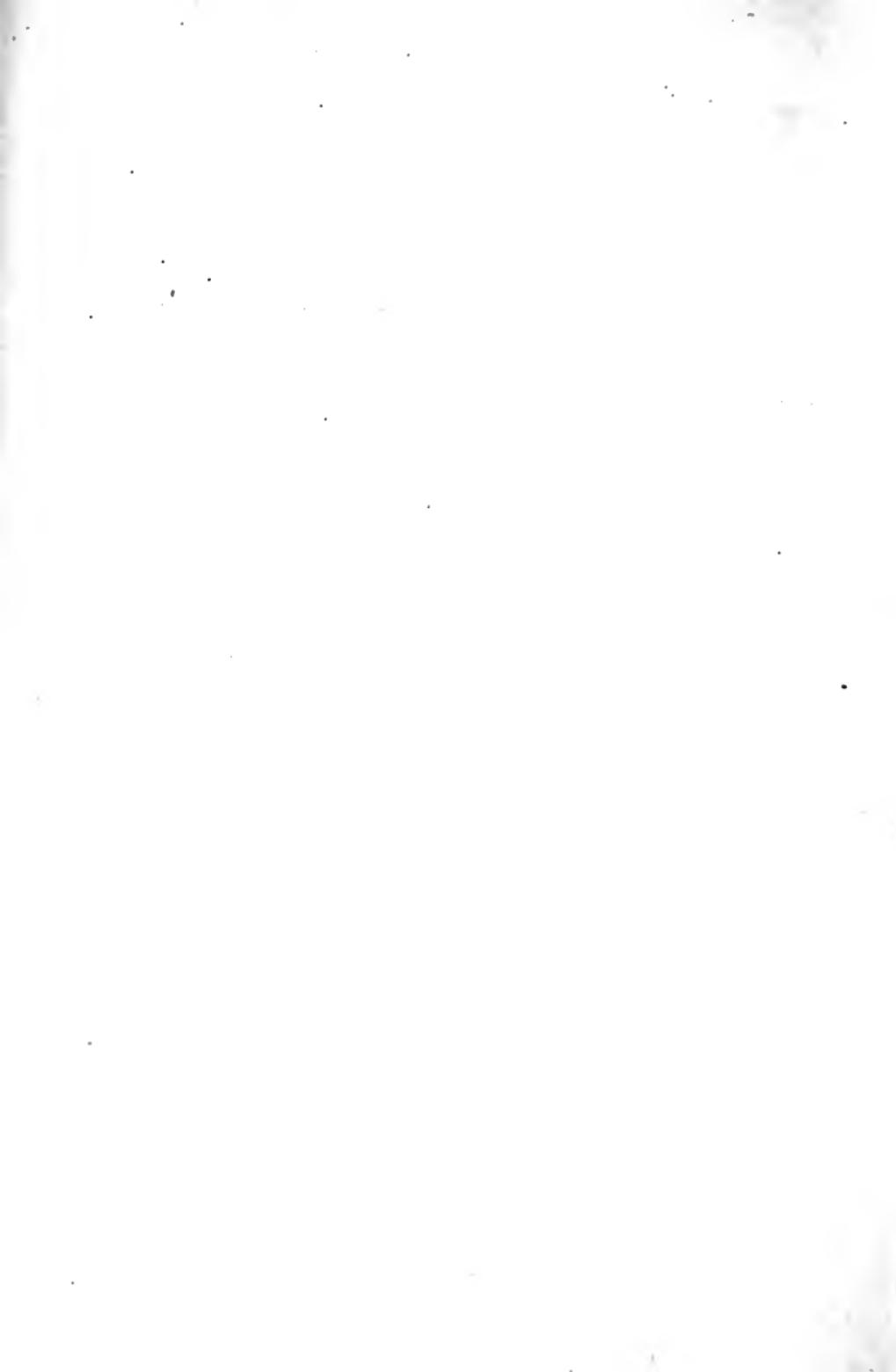


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H U G H M O O R E

A NOVEL

BY

E V E L Y N S T O N E

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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HUGH MOORE.

CHAPTER XI.

"The human heart is like the budded, folded leaves, and like the untaught lark. The quiet sleep before the day of blooming is, while it lasts, a state of happiness."

THE frost did not return; it was indeed unusual that it should have lasted so long, extending, as it had done, well into the month of February. And between the intense cold of the frost and the bitter cold of the east winds, came a spell of spring-like weather, calm and sunny, when the buds looked ready to burst, the bulbs appeared above the ground, and the birds sang their

little hearts out in every tree and bush which gave them shelter. It was on one of these afternoons that Lady Katherine and Dorothea paid their promised visit to the flagship. Captain Newman had not forgotten to let Hugh know when the day was fixed, and at the appointed hour the latter met the ladies at the steps, where the Commander's gig was in waiting. The harbour looked very pretty in the soft light of the early spring day ; the sunset colours were reflected in the calm water, which lay so unruffled that the ships were mirrored in it with startling clearness. The oars left a long, golden streak of light behind them ; and faintly in the growing twilight, far up the harbour, the forms of the old dismantled hulks stood out against the pink and orange of the sky.

“A peaceful old age,” said Dorothea to Hugh, seeing that his eyes had followed hers ;

"but it must be rather sad to feel yourself elbowed out of the way, and stowed in some forgotten corner, while the horrid ugly new things come and fill up your room."

"Oh, well, I don't know," he replied ; "that is the old people's view of the case, selfishly speaking ; but what if they can put themselves a little in the young one's place, and say, 'We have had our day ; let us stand aside and see the young people have their turn, and perhaps they'll manage better' ? "

"I don't believe they will manage better," she said, eagerly. "I think old people are much wiser than young ones."

"Do you really?" said Hugh, meditatively ; so that Lady Katherine laughed, and told him that the possibility of such a thing seemed never to have struck him.

Just then the coxswain skilfully steered the gig alongside of the flag-ship ; in a mo-

ment all the oars were tossed, and Captain Newman was at the gangway ready to receive his guests. They walked along the spotless decks, the Commander and Lady Katherine first, with Dorothea and Hugh following, and lingering a little to admire the view.

The ladder leading to the cabins was steep and slippery, but Captain Newman knew by long experience how to help ladies in climbing or descending it: he was very skilful and gentle in his management, and Lady Katherine, who was easily frightened, felt no nervousness when in his charge. He conducted her to the bottom, and then was returning to look after Dorothea, as he had often done before, when he saw that she found Hugh's assistance quite enough; so he turned back to her mother, and led the way to his cabin. He was well off for room, as the Captain did not live on board, and he

had the use of a charming cabin opening on to a stern-walk, which he made bright with flowers in summer, and from which there was always a pretty view up or down the harbour, according to the tide—either up towards our friends the old hulks, with a background of dark-green hill and red-sand-stone cliffs in the distance—or down towards the entrance to the harbour, with the open sea beyond, flanked on both sides of the water by the red-brick, red-tiled houses of Eastport, which looked picturesque at a distance, though they could not boast of much beauty on a nearer inspection. Hugh asked the Commander how long he had been on board the flag-ship.

“Three years next June,” he replied; “my time will soon be up.”

Hugh wondered if he would be very sorry to leave this cosy rest; but for some reason he did not ask him any questions on the

subject, and Captain Newman began to show off his treasures and curiosities.

The cabin was not so full of knick-knacks as some are, but the taste was better than is sometimes the case. There were no pictures of young women outrageously dressed and very much *rouged*, with hair like a bird's nest, and unnaturally large eyes, which seem somehow very often to find favour with sailors. There were also more books than usual, and those more varied in character—though nautical histories and accounts of voyages and discoveries were not wanting ; and there were a few photographs of his friends, but not many, and those chiefly of elderly people or little children. Among them was one of a baby to whom he had stood godfather in Mr Johnson's parish—a poor little baby, who would never know who its parents were ; but he did not draw attention to that—he was too shy even to tell Dorothea.

Captain Newman did the honours of his tea-table himself; and though he poured out the tea with more care and anxiety and less ease than a lady would have done, he did not ask either of his visitors to assist him, and he would not even let Hugh hand round the bread and butter—or the cake, for which the flag-ship cook was famous. He did everything himself; and Lady Katherine rallied him a little on his bachelor habits.

“I have had time to learn by this time, have I not?” he said, and the tone of his voice was rather pathetic.

After tea came music. He asked Dorothea if she would “open” his piano, which had not been used before; and he arranged the music-stool and lighted the candles for her, and then went back to his seat by Lady Katherine, from which he could watch Dorothea’s face as she sang. Her voice was pure and full, though not very powerful, and she

had been well taught in Germany and Italy. She was not afraid, as most amateurs are, of showing any feeling; but she took possession of her subject, as it were, and then interpreted it with all the strength of which she was capable. Perhaps she sang little German songs best—partly because she loved the music dearly, and partly because they were not beyond her compass, and yet required rendering well to make them effective. At any rate, none of her hearers were inclined to be very critical that afternoon; and they made her sing song after song, till at last she came to the little *Volkslied* “Auf Wiederseh’n,” and Hugh recognised the air at once.

“ You were singing that on the stairs the first day I called at Admiralty House,” he said, eagerly, “ and I wondered then what the words meant. Would you mind singing it once more ? ”

“ Oh no, not at all ; and I’ll translate it for you, if you like,” she said, laughing.
“ The words are very simple. You don’t know German ? ”

“ Not a word, except *Ja* ; and I am certain I have only to say that to be recognised as a John Bull.”

“ Or a Paddy,” she suggested, saucily.

“ Won’t you have such an ignoramus for a compatriot, Miss Nevill ? I am not worth teaching, I know ; but I will remember the meaning of this song, if you’ll tell me.”

So she sang it, and this is how it ran :—

“GOTTES RATH UND SCHEIDEN.

1.

“ Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath,
Dass man vom Liebsten was man hat,
Muss scheiden.
Wiewohl doch Nichts, im Lauf der Welt,
Dem Herzen, ach ! so sauer fällt,
Als scheiden.

2.

“ So Dir geschenkt ein Röslein was,
So thu’ es in ein Wasserglas ;
Doch wisse :
Blüht morgen dir ein Röslein auf,
Es welkt wohl schon die Nacht darauf,
Das wisse ! Ja wisse !

3.

“ Und hat dir Gott ein Lieb bescheert,
Und hällst du sie recht innig werth,
Die Deine ;
Es wird wohl wenig Zeit nur sein,
Da lässt sie dich so ganz allein,
Dann weine ! Ja weine !

4.

“ Nur musst du mich auch recht versteh’n,
Ja recht versteh’n,
Wenn Menschen auseinander geh’n,
So sagen sie : Auf Wiederseh’n,
Auf Wiederseh’n.”

As Captain Newman watched the pair laughing and talking together,—he with his elbow on the piano, gazing down at her with eyes full of admiration, she looking up at

him in all her unconscious queenliness (this is how they appeared to the Commander), —the thought suddenly flashed across him, “Those two are made for each other. Already they are quite happy together. She is singing for him, not for me.” But he went on talking to Lady Katherine, though without paying much heed to what he was saying, and straining his ears to catch the tones of Dorothea’s voice all the while. He could not hear what she was saying, for unconsciously their voices had dropped. Hugh had sat down beside her, and was humming the tune as she repeated the words. “It is awfully pretty, but rather dismal,” was his comment.

“So many of the prettiest things are plaintive,” she said; “but this one ends, at any rate, with hope,—‘Auf Wiederseh’n’—we shall meet again.”

“Only you have been left quite alone first,

which is the part I object to. You aren't necessarily obliged to leave a thing or a person because you like them."

" You agree, perhaps, with another of my songs, which says, ' Wenn zwei gute Freunde sind, Die einander kennen, Sonn' und Mond bewegen sich, Ehe sie sich trennen' ? "

" Which is, being interpreted ? "

" " When there are two good friends who know each other, heaven and earth may move before they part.' "

" Firstrate ! Yes, ' them's my sentiments,' as Mrs Macartney says."

" Well, but circumstances are sometimes stronger than people's wills."

" People can conquer circumstances."

" Oh, Mr Moore, they can't always. Have you never been obliged to do anything against your will ? Do you mean to say you don't believe anybody parts from anybody else except when they wish ? "

“ Not quite that ; because there are two people’s wills in the matter.”

“ ‘Zwei gute Freunde,’ ” said Dorothea, thoughtfully ; “ but even then I am sure your theory won’t hold good. No ; it seems to me, the really bitter thing is, when you go away and can’t say, ‘ Auf Wiederseh’n.’ You meet, for instance, travelling, with such very nice people sometimes : you are quite sure you would be great friends if you saw more of each other ; but you go away, and you never come across them again. I think that is sad.”

“ You may escape troubles and annoyances like that too,” said Hugh, thinking of Corfu.

“ There are compensations in everything,” she answered ; “ perhaps you love your *Röslein* all the more tenderly because you know it will fade to-morrow ; but to my mind, that doesn’t make up for the fading.”

“ But supposing you pick your rosebud,

and put it in its glass, and then find it doesn't smell?"

"Then," she said, looking rather surprised at the strange suggestion, "you must have made a mistake; you ought to have smelt it before you picked it."

"Let us drop metaphors," he said. "I want to ask you a question,"—and she saw by the light in his eyes, and heard by the tone in his voice, that he was very much in earnest,—"What is your idea of an honourable man?"

"That is a wide question," she replied, "and difficult to answer off-hand; but I can tell you what has always seemed to me the best description I have ever heard—'He that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance.'"

"Upon my word, Miss Nevill, you seem to know one's thoughts," exclaimed Hugh,

who was making her in his own mind sit in judgment on himself and Clara.

“I don’t the least know what you mean,” said Dorothea.

But Hugh continued, “Do you think a fellow is never justified in changing his mind?”

“Of course I don’t,—that would be too silly,” she answered, a little worried at the enigmatic way he took her into his confidence; “but I can’t believe an honourable man would break his word, even when the fulfilment came hard upon him.”

How he wished he could make up his mind to tell her everything! But he could not summon up courage to do so; and once more the opportunity passed, and the conversation turned to less confidential matters. He told her of his meeting with the Radical candidate, and asked if she took much interest in politics.

“My father’s sympathies are all with the

Tories," she said, "but we can't, of course, take any active part; and privately, I shan't be sorry—very—if Sir John Hawker is defeated."

"Then you won't be angry with me for feeling the same? By the by, did you discover how our friend Macartney got into his bad books?"

"Oh, I had such an amusing talk with Mrs Macartney the other day. She described a visit the 'American gentleman,' as she called him, had paid her. "'I hear you're Irish,'" says he. "'No, sir,'" says I, "'I thanks my stars I ain't.'" "'Then your husband is,'" says he. "'Maybe he is,'" says I, "'and more's the pity.'" "'Just what I think,'" says he; "'now don't you let him go and make a fool of hisself.'" "'Fool of hisself, sir!'" says I. "'Ay, fool!'" says he, quite angry-like; "'he's goin' and talkin' to all them fellows at the club, and tellin' 'em things as he knows nothin' about.'" "'There's others as talks of

things as they knows nothin' about," says I. I did, indeed, Miss, for 'twasn't reason as I should stand and hear him abuse Macartney, was it, Miss ?' And of course I told her," Dorothea proceeded, "that it was natural and proper she should stand up for her husband; and then she went on to describe a regular fencing-match she had with Sir John, and according to her own account he had much the worst of it, but I daresay his story is different. Anyhow, he seems to have left her in high dudgeon."

"He has got a clever chap to fight him, at any rate," said Hugh. "James is an odd fellow, and not a bit of a gentleman; but that doesn't signify much nowadays, and he has plenty of brains and any amount of self-confidence. Pluck and push are the great requisites for success in this world, Miss Nevill. The modest people get shoved into the background."

"I don't believe that," said Dorothea, with one of her bright courageous smiles; "the counterfeit coin may pass for a time, but it is found out at last."

"Too late sometimes! However, I am going to act on my doctrine, and see if I can't 'push' my fortunes a little. I am going to volunteer for Africa."

"Oh, are you?" she cried. "Being a woman, I think this war is horrid: all my friends seem to be going out there. Being a man, I suppose you are delighted."

"At the opportunity of showing I possess a little of that other article that begins with a P? Well, yes, I am."

"Perhaps they won't have you," she suggested shyly.

"Oh yes, they will," he answered; "I have made all that straight with the general. He is a good old chap after all. I had a long talk with him this morning, and he pro-

mised to write to the authorities on my behalf ; so I have no fear of being refused."

" And you expect to come back field-marshall at least ? "

" How cruel you are, Miss Nevill, to throw cold water on my youthful ardour ! Do you think I will run away ? "

" Not quite," she answered, laughing, and blushing a little ; " but I don't like you to talk of going to fight just to push your fortunes."

" What else should I go for but honour and glory ? " he asked, pretending not to understand her.

" The real honour is in serving your country ; don't you think so ? "

" My country could do very well without me, I am afraid. But, seriously, I am sorry I will be away just when Nora will be here. She comes to-morrow. May I bring her to see you before I go ? I want you to wish me

success. I would like to take ‘ Auf Wieder-seh’n ’ as my talisman.”

The last words were spoken low and hurriedly, for Lady Katherine was on the point of leaving ; but Dorothea heard them, though she made no reply.

She pondered much during the evening on this conversation with Hugh ; but could not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion in her own mind, and did not take either her mother or Frances into her confidence. She was rather afraid just now of Lady Katherine, for she could not understand why she was not allowed to criticise and laugh at Sir John Hawker as much as she chose (she was accustomed to express her opinions very freely at home) ; and the mere possibility of having to encourage this unwelcome suitor struck her with so much horror that she could not bear to face it. As to Hugh, she liked him very much ; but it puzzled her that he should

take her so far into his confidence and no further. Why did he not talk to her about Miss Wilson, since he evidently liked to discuss things with her? And what did he mean by that last speech? She could not believe he was a mere vulgar flirt, but she certainly thought he was going a little too far. If she had been Clara, she would not have approved of his speaking to another girl in such a manner. Perhaps Mrs Fitzgerald would tell her more about it. She wondered when Hugh would bring his sister to see them; she wondered many things, in fact, and thought so much about the matter, that every time she heard the bell ring she waited to hear if it was Mrs Fitzgerald and Mr Moore who were announced.

And she had not long to wait.

Hugh met his sister at the station on the day following the tea on board the flag-ship. She arrived, accompanied by her three chil-

dren and as many servants ; and there appeared to her brother an endless quantity of baggage, great and small ; but he hurried her and her eldest boy into the fly, and bore them off to the hotel at once, leaving the rest to find their way as best they might. The rooms he had secured for her were bright and comfortable, with a good sea-view, and Nora soon made herself thoroughly at home. She kept her brother to dine with her, and after dinner settled herself in an arm-chair, and began to question him as to his opinion of Eastport. “ Better than you expected, isn’t it ? ” she asked.

“ Yes ; not such a bad place, when you get accustomed to it,” he answered. “ There are some jolly people here, whom you shall know if you like.”

“ Thanks. I never despise a good offer.”

“ Oh, by the by, Nora, you can go in for

some electioneering if you like ! I know that's very much in your line."

"Indeed ! this is very exciting," she said, sitting upright in her chair.

"But, unfortunately, *my* friend is the Radical!"

"Hugh ! Hugh ! what will I do to you ?"

"No, I don't think I can let you canvass, after all, Nora. The Tory is a—well, a beast —no other word is quite applicable ; and I don't know that you would altogether appreciate the charms of my friend James. Do you think you could give him some information as to the Eastern question ?"

"I could tell him some home-truths about Ireland."

"He doesn't want home-truths ; he only cares about Home Rule."

"I declare, Hugh, you're getting quite epigrammatic ! So your time is taken up with politics ?"

“It is not, indeed! I don’t interfere in them at all. I haven’t been to hear James speak yet.”

“I hope you keep up your dancing?”

“Well, it has not got rusty for want of practice; but there are no more balls now till Easter.”

“Oh, I forgot Lent. Tell me who you dance with?”

“Lots of girls.”

“How horrid you are! You don’t help me one bit, and you know I am dying to hear all about Dorothy Nevill.”

“What about her?”

“Does she dance well?”

“Very well.”

“And talk?”

“She can talk, and sing, and ride, and skate, and go to church, and to mothers’ meetings, or old women’s teas, or something of the sort; and she can read, and I think

she can write—and—let me see, I forget what sciences and languages she knows—and——”

“ Oh, stop that, you horrid boy! Do be serious a moment. Have you heard from Corfu ?”

“ Not for a long time.”

“ That’s all right,” with a sigh of relief. “ Then I hope you have forgotten all that nonsense.”

“ I wish I could forget it. It is very much on my mind, and I want you to be reasonable and talk to me sensibly about it.”

But Nora would only repeat what she had said in Ireland, and Hugh did not get much satisfaction out of her: she was too vehement a partisan to be trustworthy, he thought; but the last few months had made a great difference in his own ideas on the subject.

“The wish is father to the thought,” and he was gradually coming round to his father’s and sister’s view of the case. True, Dorothea had disconcerted him by her definition of an “honourable man,” but then she did not know the circumstances, and he certainly had not “sworn unto another”; so if there were any “disappointment” in the matter, he would not, at any rate, be guilty of breaking his *plighted* word. And yet—and yet—what had he said and done at Paleocastrizza, and at that dance on board the Royal Britain?

It was late when at length he got up and wished his sister good-night, and it was only at parting that he gave her Dorothea’s message, as if he had but just remembered it, whereas in reality he had been thinking of it all the evening.

“By the by, Nora, I was to ask you from Miss Neyill,” he said, “when you would

come to see her. Lady Katherine asked me to bring you to lunch to-morrow."

"That is a charming arrangement," she replied. "I am longing to see Dorothy again. I thought her one of the prettiest girls I had ever seen."

"So she is," said her brother under his breath. "I will call for you, then, and we will walk down to Admiralty House together."

Lady Katherine had indeed invited Mr Moore, with much cordiality, to come to lunch and bring his sister; but she had not told him when doing so that she had already invited Sir John Hawker. If he had known this fact, he might not have accepted with so much pleasure.

Lady Katherine had "taken up" the Conservative candidate. He had paid assiduous court to her first, and then to her daughter, and her ladyship secretly liked to feel her

power, and that through her means Sir John would be “received in society.” She was too much of a lady herself not to be sensible that he was wanting in refinement; but she imagined that this was owing to his long residence in America, and credited that unhappy country with all his failings and peculiarities. She was pleased to see that Dorothea had made a conquest of the richest man in the county; but she did not at all object to what she regarded as a little becoming hesitation on her daughter’s part, provided it were not carried too far. She was quite willing Sir John should see how anxious Captain Newman was to please Dorothea, how happy Hugh Moore was in her company, and how devoted some of the younger naval officers were to her; for she liked him to appreciate the honour which would eventually be conferred on him with Miss Nevill’s hand. Lady Katherine loved

and respected her husband ; but she had not been in love with him when she married, and she did not expect her daughter to make any objections on that score, provided her parents considered the match suitable in other respects. As for Sir Edward, she had never discussed the matter with him ; but she knew he rather pooh-poohed the idea of sentimental nonsense, and he was disposed to take Sir John Hawker's part, from a dislike of injustice and preconceived prejudices. He was very busy ; the Admiralty were always requiring his presence in London, and Dorothea saw less of him than usual. Her great allies were her two cousins ; but Charlie, though good-natured, was lazy, and afraid of annoying his aunt ; and Frances, since her memorable outburst on the last afternoon of the frost, was only able to offer her secret sympathy, and encourage Dorothea privately in resistance.

Hugh had not told his sister anything more about Sir John Hawker; and Mrs Fitzgerald, therefore, on Lady Katherine's introduction, greeted him with her usual pretty frankness. At lunch she was placed next to him; for Hugh had adroitly taken possession of the chair next Dorothea's seat, and, under pretence of helping her to carve, succeeded in monopolising her very successfully.

Nora chatted away to her neighbour, and was soon telling him stories of her husband's adventures in the Rocky Mountains. Sir John was very attentive, and asked a great many questions—so many, that she thought he was an excellent specimen of Yankee curiosity; for what could it matter to him how many times Mr Fitzgerald had been in the States, with the exact dates and the ports at which he embarked and disembarked? However, nothing would do

but that he must know these details, and a great many besides. So she gave them willingly enough ; for what had she to conceal ? She assured him that her husband might arrive in Eastport any day. It would certainly be soon, though his movements were so very uncertain ; he would be delighted to meet some one who knew so much about the Western States, and he could answer all Sir John's questions so much better than she—Nora—could ever do. Sir John politely said she was mistaken in both her statements. He was quite sure she could tell him as much as Mr Fitzgerald ; and as to his knowledge of the Western States, it was only from hearsay. He had never been there ; Chicago was his furthest limit westward. Nora looked surprised, at which he seemed annoyed ; but her surprise was only occasioned by such an unusually good memory.

Sir John was obliged to leave directly after lunch to catch a train for London, and Nora noticed that he rather glared at her brother as he said good-bye. She concluded they had quarrelled about Dorothea.

“Hugh,” she said, as they were taking their leave, “I have been trying to persuade Miss Nevill and her cousin to come out with us for a ride on Monday. Could you manage it, do you think?”

Oh yes! He was sure the General could spare him in the afternoon. Would Miss Nevill come? Charlie said he would see she did, and Lady Katherine made no objection; for Nora had taken her by storm, as she did most people; and in addition, there was the same secret reason for liking her (hidden deep down in her ladyship’s heart) as there was for approving so highly of Hugh. Were they not Lord Glengarn’s children?

The chivalrous way in which Hugh always treated her reminded her so often of the days of her girlhood; for Lady Katherine possessed a soft heart though a worldly mind—a combination, alas! by no means uncommon.

When Mrs Fitzgerald and her brother left Admiralty House, Nora was silent for a few minutes, and then she said, in her peculiarly soft, pathetic Hibernian voice—

“Hugh, I think you’re smitten.”

“Who with? Lady Katherine?”

“The mother’s always a good excuse, no doubt; but I was thinking of the daughter.”

“Well, Nora,” he said, quite seriously, “it is no use trying to hide anything from you, and I am afraid you’re about right.”

“You’re a dear good boy to go and do just what I wished,” she said, excitedly. “It shows your good taste.”

“You take things rather for granted,” said

Hugh; “there are two people to be consulted, remember—and besides——”

“There is a rival,” said Nora, composedly.

“You saw that?” cried Hugh. “Before I came here, I thought of course it would be the cousin ; but I must say, Master Charlie is as innocent as a baby of flirting with her—his heart is set at present on his dogs and his vermin.”

“How incoherent you are!. It is quite difficult to follow you. However, I suppose Sir John Hawker is in earnest?”

“Oh, rather! Don’t you see, it is all his game. He wants to get into Parliament, and ‘society’ forsooth. By the way, Nora, how abominably civil you were to him! I can’t think how you could talk to such a brute!”

“Dear me! how jealous we are! You didn’t want me to be rude to Sir Edward’s

guest, surely? Eastport must have depraved you sadly."

"But isn't he a beast?"

"I don't approve of violent language," said Nora, laughing; "but I should not be much afraid of him as a rival if I were you."

"It is not only that," said Hugh; "but what chance have I? I am going away directly, and goodness knows when I shall come back. Besides, it would not be fair to speak to a girl just when one was off to a war. Of course one can never tell. One might never come back, you know."

"I think that question of speaking or not, entirely depends on the girl," said Nora. "Supposing she cared for you, she would much rather have some pledge from you; you could write to each other, too: whereas if you went away without saying a word, she

might misunderstand you, and think you had only been playing with her. Men seem so often to forget that a woman can never ask for an explanation."

"By Jove!" said Hugh; and then he walked on quite silently for a few minutes. He was not really so calm as he looked—his mind was working up and down in a furious turmoil; but at last he said, "I never thought of that before. But it would startle her so awfully. I don't suppose she has any idea of it. I have never said a word to her. I think I had better wait till I come back—if I do—and take my chance then."

"And let Sir John Hawker carry her off meanwhile?"

"The idea is enough to drive one crazy!" cried Hugh, striding on furiously for a few paces.

"How ever had you the face to talk to me last night about Clara Wilson?" said Nora,

mischievously. She could not resist the pleasure of this home-thrust, but she was startled at the almost fierce way Hugh turned upon her.

“Why did I do it? Because I wanted advice; because I curse myself for my folly. I feel ten years older since I was at Corfu; and I am certain if I were to ask her—Miss Nevill—she would say, ‘Go back to Corfu’—and that’s why I can’t bear to—to tell her I love her. There! you have got it all out now, and you may laugh at me to your heart’s content.”

“Laugh at you, you poor boy! That’s the very last thing I want to do. I only think you are the veriest nineteenth-century Don Quixote, that’s all. I should like to know how many people would make themselves miserable, as you are doing, about a wretched little flirtation when they were ill and idle. We won’t talk any more about it

now, and you have all to-morrow to think over what you will do. You don't start before Monday or Tuesday week, do you?"

"All to-morrow!" How little the brother and sister thought of the change which the morning's post would bring in their hopes and fears!

CHAPTER XII.

“ Oh, many a shaft at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant ;
And many a word at random spoken,
May soothe, or wound, a heart that's broken ! ”

“ In delay we waste our lights in vain,
Like lamps by day.”

A SUNNY room in one of the hotels at Cannes. The view is over the lovely bay ; there are boats, with their white sails, dancing on the blue water, and the beach is gay with the merry voices and laughter of English children. In the room there is darkness and quiet ; the green venetians are closed, and there is no sound but the ticking of a clock, and the short uneasy breathing of a patient, who sits in a big arm-chair, propped up with cushions, his eyes closed, but not in sleep.

It is Ion Moore. The improvement which had seemed so great had suddenly vanished; a change of wind, a little extra exertion—they could hardly tell what it was—had caused a considerable accession of disease, and a still more alarming decrease of strength. In the *salon* adjoining the bedroom, a consultation was being held between two doctors and Lord and Lady Glengarn.

His lordship looked older and whiter than when we saw him in Ireland; and the look of strain and tension on his wife's face had become habitual. She was weeping bitterly as she heard the doctors' words of doom—“He may last a few weeks, or the end may come very quickly—perhaps next week: the case is quite hopeless.”

When the doctors were gone, Lord Glengarn turned to his wife and said, “I must write to Hugh. I cannot let him go to Africa now.”

“ Hugh ! ” said Lady Glengarn, in a stifled voice ; “ how can you think of *him* now ? ”

“ But I must think of him, my dear,” he answered, sadly and gently. “ I am sorry for him too, poor boy. See, he writes in such spirits about it ! Thinks he will get on the staff—such a chance ! Hopes to win his spurs, and do some real work—show what stuff a Moore is made of. Perhaps get his promotion. See us all at Glengarn in the autumn. Poor boy ! poor boy ! Upon my word, it seems a shame to stop him ; and yet—and yet—— No, I *can’t* let him go. It is too great a risk : I *can’t* lose both my boys ! ” And the poor old gentleman’s voice broke. He rose hastily and walked to the window, and secretly took out his handkerchief. His wife was sitting motionless in her chair, paying no heed to what he said ; only when appealed to directly, “ Don’t you think

we must send for him here, my dear?" she answered absently—

"What? I didn't hear. Do as you like. I am going to Ion;" and she rose and left the room.

Lord Glengarn sighed heavily, and in a few minutes followed his wife. Ion opened his eyes at the rustle of her dress. There was an expression of less restlessness in them than before, but more languor and suffering; yet he was buoyed up by that wonderful hopefulness which is such a singular feature in consumptive patients.

"How are you feeling, darling?" she asked—a question repeated twenty times a-day, and always calling forth the same answer—"Better, thanks,"—an answer which would have made one smile, had it not been so pathetic. With all her tenderness, she was the worst possible person in a sick-room; and the little French Sister who was nursing

him, was often driven nearly to distraction by her incessant fidgetiness, and the open way in which she displayed her anxiety, when, to give the patient a fair chance, everything ought to have been sunny and calm.

He took his mother by surprise on this occasion, by saying, “I wish Hugh could get leave and come out here.”

It struck her with a little pang, as if he felt himself dull or neglected.

“Hugh!” she said; “are you not satisfied with us, my darling?”

“Satisfied!” he answered wearily, “oh yes; but Hugh is such a jolly fellow, it does one good to look at him.”

“I will write to him and ask him to come if he can,” said Lord Glengarn, who had just overheard the last few words. “I am sure he will do his best to manage it, but of course he may not be able to get away.”

“Thanks, father,” said Ion, closing his

eyes again as if he wished to be quiet. The Sister arranged his pillows, and saying softly to Lady Glengarn, "He may sleep, madam," placed a chair for her, so as to induce her to sit down and keep still and silent.

That evening Lord Glengarn wrote to Eastport. He did not wish to alarm his son unnecessarily, so he did not telegraph, but put the case as gently before him as possible, rather softening Ion's most alarming symptoms, but ordering Hugh quite peremptorily to give up all idea of Africa, and to come out to Cannes as soon as possible. The consequence was, that when the letter arrived, Hugh did not realise the danger of his brother's state, and on the other hand felt to the full all that keen disappointment as to the failure of his professional hopes which his father had dreaded for him.

The letter reached him on a Sunday morning—the day following the lunch at Admi-

rality House and his subsequent talk with Nora. He came down-stairs rather later than usual, his head full of a political meeting he had attended in the evening, at which Mr James had been explaining his views to those whom he regarded affectionately in the light of his constituents. His speech had created much applause : it contained a good deal of twaddle, but not more than is necessary to excite the sympathies of an audience such as he was addressing ; and the greater part was at least tersely and clearly expressed, leaving no doubt as to his meaning and intentions. Mr James was a thorough-going Radical. He sympathised with the aspirations of all young and ambitious communities, and had no doubts at all on the subject of the Eastern question ; but as this part of his speech was a little beyond the capacities of the Eastport natives, he did not dwell much on it, but expatiated at more length on the necessity

for manhood suffrage and reduced taxation. How this latter was to be accomplished without great reductions in the army and navy he did not say; for both services were popular in Eastport, inasmuch as the town really subsisted on the spoils of the garrison and dockyard. Towards the end he made a very effective point, by confessing himself to be a man of the people, whose sole right to sit in Parliament would be the mandate of the people, as whose delegate he would appear, bound to do nothing but further the views of his constituents. He had no wealth, he said, but this at least ensured the purity of his motives and entire absence of any attempt at illegal influences. This side-hit at the Conservative candidate found much favour; and when Mr James protested that though he had no money, all the best powers of his mind (such as they were) were at their disposal, and he should regard himself as

too much honoured if they imposed any duties upon him, and intrusted him with carrying out their desires, the applause was enthusiastic, and he sat down amid a storm of cheers and clapping.

Hugh did not wish to be recognised, as it would not do for him to appear to take any part in politics; so he slipped away before the meeting was quite over. But it was already late; and when he awoke the next morning, it was to find that the heavy atmosphere of the hall, impregnated with the fumes of gas and smoke, had made him drowsier than usual, and prolonged his sleep an hour or so beyond his ordinary time. His breakfast was cold, and his tea had long ceased boiling; but the letter from Cannes effectually took away any appetite he might have had.

Poor Hugh! He broke the seal with such pleasurable anticipations — certain, as he

thought, to find his father congratulating him on his good prospects, and fully expecting to be told, as usual, that his brother was making satisfactory progress.

Any true soldier can realise the shock of disappointment which he felt on glancing down the sheet — a disappointment which only increased in intensity the more he thought of it. He paced up and down the little room, or sat with his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands, till the morning had passed away and he had worried himself almost out of his senses. Then he thought of going to see Nora, but shrank from a woman's sympathy. The wound must be probed, not salved over. So he resolved to call on the General; and after swallowing a little lunch, which the servant-maid had placed unnoticed on the table, he went out and took several turns up and down on the sea-shore, that the

air might cool and calm him a little. But the beach and sea-wall were too crowded with people: soldiers arm in arm with their sweethearts; nurserymaids wheeling along perambulators full of babies, whose heads were dropping, neglected, on one side, while the girls flirted and giggled with smart footmen or bearded blue-jackets; paterfamilias taking his numerous flock out for a Sunday walk,—and all the other Eastport holiday-makers. The sea-wall was a favourite Sunday resort; and Hugh, who felt distracted, fancied he must look so, and that people were staring at him (a very unusual piece of self-consciousness for him); and besides, he wanted a quiet place to think in. So he went straight on past the Forts down to the steeply shelving, pebbly beach; and there he found only a few coast-guardsmen, and some little boys who were playing among the boats stranded high and dry

on the shore. Hugh sat down on one of these and wished he were a child once more. These children never seemed discouraged at failure: to fall a thousand times, and yet get up laughing and try again, seemed to be their one idea. Two little fellows were endeavouring to launch a great sailing-smack. They might as well have tried to drag the whole of Eastport out to sea; but they repeated their attempts time after time, and only desisted when they were thoroughly tired out and could do nothing but lie panting on the shingle. In two minutes they were up again; and this time it was an old rusty anchor, lying deeply embedded in the sand, and wreathed with sea-weed like the garlands that cover a grave—it was this weighty piece of iron which the children wished to move. Hugh laughed to himself—a laugh without merriment. “I am like those boys,” he thought. “I can no

more succeed in my soldiering than they can in launching that boat; and if I try to succeed in love, they may as well think they can move that anchor. Circumstances are too much for me; I shall cave in." It was getting on in the afternoon when he was admitted into his chief's study.

The General liked his aide-de-camp, who took an interest in his work and gave himself real trouble to see that it was well done. He noticed directly how dejected Hugh looked, and inquired what was the matter.

"I have come to say, sir, that I am very sorry, but I won't be able to go to Africa after all."

"Heyday! what's this? Changed your mind all of a sudden?"

"Not at all," said Hugh, gloomily, handing him Lord Glengarn's letter; "this came to-day, and I suppose I cannot go now."

The General fumbled for his spectacles, walked to the window for light, and read the letter slowly twice through. Then he said—

“ So you want leave to go to Cannes ? ”

“ Well, sir, you see my father wishes me to ask for it.”

“ H’m, h’m,—I suppose I must let you go. I am confoundedly sorry.”

“ So am I,” said Hugh, and his face fully confirmed the words.

“ It is not so much about your brother. Of course one’s sorry for that; but I don’t know him, and young fellows often get over these attacks. But it vexes me that you should lose this chance. I don’t know when you will get another.”

“ That’s just about the truth — and it plagues me horribly. But I don’t see how I can get out of this business,—do you, sir ? ”

“ Oh no. You must go to your brother—

you must go," said the General, testily. "I will give you leave, of course; and I will tell Lawrence he must get some one to fill up your place on his staff."

The words were not unkindly meant. On the contrary, they were an implied compliment, for it was not to every one that the old soldier would have shown so much concern at the alteration in his plans and prospects; but all the same, they wounded Hugh like so many poisoned arrows, and he left the General with his feeling as to the "wrongness of things" only intensified, and his disappointment more bitter. He loved his profession, whatever he might sometimes say against it; and this check, at what appeared to him a critical moment in his career, was very hard to bear. For the time, his brother became almost a secondary consideration, so absorbed was he in the failure of his own hopes and ambition.

He had been so engrossed by his own thoughts all day, that he had quite forgotten it was Sunday, and he had made no plans for disposing of his evening; but now the thought suddenly struck him, why not drop into Saint Thomas, and see what the parson, about whom he had heard so much, was really like? Miss Nevill admired him, and, what was still more to the purpose, the Macartneys worshipped him; and if nothing else, it would make a change. So he threaded his way through the poor little streets, similar to that in which his Irish friends were lodging—varying from dingy respectability to courts and alleys where it seemed hardly possible for human beings to live—and at length he found himself face to face with the porch of S. Thomas.

The church was quite new, and built entirely owing to the exertions of Mr Johnson and his fellow-workers; but the result, even

architecturally, fully repaid them for their labours. It was a grand pile—a basilica—with a sanctuary simply but richly adorned, and raised above the level of the nave, so as to be well seen from all parts of the church. When Hugh entered, the lights in the nave were just turned down, leaving the choir and altar a blaze of light, and the congregation were seating themselves for the sermon. A very mixed congregation it was; many very poor—but some of the shopkeeper class, and many higher still, quite the “upper ten” of Eastport. Hugh knew nothing of church architecture, but the whole struck him as very vast and impressive; and his eye, trained to military exactness, noted with approval the regularity and symmetry of all the details and arrangements.

By the time he had completed his leisurely inspection, and roused himself a little from his own sad thoughts, Mr Johnson was well

advanced in his sermon. He was a tall spare man, not old, but with a face much worn and furrowed with lines of care and thought, and by many vigils and ceaseless anxieties; his eye was keen and piercing, his brow lofty, and the hair, already grey, was becoming somewhat scant over the temples. His voice had not much power of sound, but it penetrated the church without any apparent effort, even to the west door. It was one of those voices which cause an instantaneous hush the moment they are lifted up; and it was this voice and manner, more than the mere words, which produced such a wonderful effect on his hearers. Hugh noticed that they were, one and all, of every class and age, intent on his words. Not a sound was heard besides; and indeed it was the single word “Failure,” twice repeated, which caught Hugh’s attention.

"I don't believe there is a single man or woman here," he went on, after a moment's pause, "who has not failed somehow or other. One of you has failed in your dearest hopes and affections. You have gone on striving and waiting, and you find after all it is no use. It is very hard : you might have been happy with something else, you think, if you had only known ; but now it is too late. And another of you has been working hard all his life, or all her life (for women work as hard as men, as you and I well know), and now in old age the work is all undone. The bank fails, or the business stops, or an illness swallows up all your savings ; and you say, too, that your life has been a failure. And another of you has striven, as father or mother, or teacher or guardian, to bring up children in the way they should go ; and they have disappointed you. They are extravagant and wilful and

unloving ; and it seems to you, your care and love have been thrown away—have failed in their purpose. And it is very bitter. And yet another is conscious of some one fault he has striven against for years. Sometimes he thinks he has conquered it ; but the monster rears his head again and again, and will not be rooted out—and you cry, ‘It is no use ; I have failed !’ Or there is a young man who is getting on well in his trade or profession or business. He seems on the highroad to success. His is the age when hopes are strong and disappointment doubly bitter. But it comes—comes in one shape or another ; and he, too, says that ‘life is a failure.’

“And do you think, dear people, that I have never felt it so ? Indeed I have—indeed in one sense I do at this very moment. I sympathise with every one of you ; for is it not true that I, too, have failed ?

I have been among you ten years. Oh, to think of the hopes I had when I came among you ! How many, think you, have been fulfilled ? I do not wish to speak of myself, except as a type and a warning to you, and —GOD grant it may be so—perchance a comfort to some. Have I not worked, and watched, and prayed ? Have I not taught and visited, preached and waited, year after year (how feebly and faultily God knows ; but still I have done it) ? I have used my strength for you ; and what is the result ? My brothers and sisters—my children whom God has given me—have pity on me ! I am going to another sphere of work. Pray for me.

“Enough of myself. We have spoken of failures. I speak it reverently — CHRIST’s ministry on earth was a failure at first. What did He leave behind Him when He died a shameful death ? A few poor women and fishermen who believed. It is the same story

through the Early Church. It is the same story with missions now: much work, many lives lost—nay, not lost, given for GOD—and few conversions. And the world scoffs! Never mind; let it scoff. It scoffed at JESUS of Nazareth, at Saul of Tarsus, at Peter the fisherman. But worse than that. Our own hearts fail us. So the apostles cried out for fear, saying, ‘We perish’; but He was with them in the boat, and they perished not. So His ark, the Church, now is sanctified by His presence, and can never sink. Therefore, courage! He whom they called the carpenter’s son is GOD Almighty; Peter the fisherman and Matthew the publican are saints in glory. Earthly failure may be heavenly success. I could almost say that heavenly success necessitates earthly failure. GOD reckons not by years. Look up, poor toiling ones, whom CHRIST has redeemed! Think not He despises the day of small

things ; think not He looks down on earthly callings. As a priest of GOD, speaking for almost the last time to you as your parish priest, I bid you come. Cast your burdens, your sins, your unfinished works, your miserable failures, at His feet ; and one day—ah, the joy and glory of that day !—you shall find those failures were His successes ; and the darkness and dimness of earthly sight shall fade away and vanish before the brightness and the beauty of the vision of the face of CHRIST !”

Hugh felt the thrill that passed through the whole congregation as the preacher made his personal appeal ; and he, too, was carried away by the rapt enthusiasm of the last few sentences. For a moment it seemed to him that his earthly hopes and ambitions were indeed small and despicable measured by the standard of such a life as Mr Johnson pictured. For a moment the gates of

heaven seemed almost opened, and some rays of glory streamed out and were reflected in the preacher's face. Only for a moment. Earth is too near, too tangible, and the golden gates are fast closed. It is given only to a few to see beyond them — and perhaps to none, until they have passed that other portal, above which is written the story of suffering in characters of blood.

When Hugh left the church, the night closed round him again dark and gloomy.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Delicately pure, and marvellously fair."

"I could not choose but deem her wise."

MONDAY morning rose chill and wintry ; the premature spring was over, and the east wind had come, but not at present in great severity.

Hugh went to see Nora as soon as he had breakfasted, and found her surrounded by her children, the eldest of whom, the little boy of four years old, for whose sake she had come to Eastport, was dancing about in high glee, and ran up to his uncle, crying out that "Father was coming ! father was coming !"

“Have you heard from Willie, Nora?”

“Yes—he is due here in a day or two; so I hope you will just see him—”

“I shall just miss him,” he said, and showed her the letter he had received from Cannes.

Her face fell as she read. “I am afraid Ion is very bad,” she said.

“I daresay he will soon get better again,” Hugh answered. “I don’t think my father seems very anxious, and I can’t make out why he is sending for me in such desperate haste.”

“That is what makes me afraid Ion is really very ill.”

“Do you know, Nora, I expect it is the mother. It is awfully hard on me!”

“It is indeed, you poor old Hugh,” said his sister. Nora was well trained. With a soldier-brother who had confided his military ambitions to her ever since he could talk,

and with a husband who was always going off to some distant corner of the earth in search of adventures, she had learnt to think calmly of dangers which made other women turn pale, and she gave all the warmth of her sisterly sympathy and affection to Hugh in his disappointment. She would not let him off his ride. He begged her to make his excuses to Miss Nevill and to Lady Katherine on the score of his sudden departure; but Nora declared she had set her heart on having him for an escort, and that he must find time to come, if only for an hour. He was really hungry for another sight of Dorothea, before he left her for an indefinite time, and he was persuaded without much difficulty to do as his sister wished.

As they started off together, Nora said gently to him, "Hugh, don't be angry with me if I give you a little piece of advice.

You are not going on a dangerous expedition now; so if that hindered you from speaking to Dorothy, the reason exists no longer. If I were you, I would not let a good opportunity slip. Don't worry yourself now with thinking about the Greek girl. If Dorothy *does* care for you, you have no right to sacrifice her to a ridiculous fancy; and you can tell her all about it some day. Make sure of her love first, and then afterwards you can make any confessions you like."

"That's the way Will treated you, I suppose? I hope you weren't awfully down on him when he did confess."

"He had nothing to confess," said Nora, indignantly; "at least"—as the recollection came across her of various youthful peccadilloes which she had heard of since her marriage—"at least, nothing to speak of."

"Those things are all matters of comparison," said Hugh, lightly; "what seems noth-

ing to an easy-going little woman like you, might be a grievous crime in Miss Nevill's eyes."

"I believe she has more sense than to be so silly. Besides, after all, what are we women that we should sit in judgment on the men? Do you imagine we are immaculate?"

Hugh made no reply. He certainly could not imagine the possibility of Dorothea Nevill ever having anything to confess to him. As they entered the dockyard, he said to his sister, "I have a great respect for your advice in general, but in this case I don't think I shall follow it. When I ask Miss Nevill to—to marry me (if I ever do), I should like to feel there is nothing to stand between us,—nothing for her to find out afterwards, to shock her or—or make her disappointed in one; in fact, I should have to tell her all about my Corfu folly."

“ You are incorrigible. I wash my hands of you,” said Nora, with a little laugh, and shrugging her shoulders slightly.

Dorothea and her cousin Charlie were waiting, and the cavalcade started at once—the ladies first, and the gentlemen following. Nora did not object to this arrangement in the beginning; but she did not intend it to continue long. While it lasted, however, she took the opportunity to tell Dorothea of her brother’s change of plans. “ Do try and console him a little,” she said; “ he is so very broken-hearted.”

It took some time to get beyond the town, for Eastport extended a long way on the other side of the dockyard; but when at last they had left the street behind them, they quickened their pace along the road, till they reached the line of red-sandstone hills at the top of the harbour, and plunged into delicious green lanes, sheltered from the sea-

breezes by thick copses and high banks that were bright already here and there with early primroses. Here Dorothea found herself beside Hugh, and noticed at once that he was not in his usual spirits; so she took Nora's advice, and tried to comfort him. She was a little shocked, however, to discover that he was thinking more of himself than of his brother.

Hugh took note of the effect his words produced, with all a lover's quickness of apprehension. "You think I am an unfeeling wretch," he said,—“but I am really awfully sorry for Ion; only I don't see why he should not get over this attack, as he has done before, when he has been every bit as bad. And—don't you see?—*I* shall do no good by going to Cannes; I can't make him any better. On the other hand, I am losing an opportunity which perhaps only comes once in a lifetime to a fellow. That is just what

the General said, when I went to get my leave yesterday."

"I am very sorry for you," said Dorothea, looking full at him with her blue eyes ; "and I suppose it is just what I have always thought—your profession comes first with you, and your family afterwards."

"What made you think that of me ?" he asked, surprised.

"Oh, not of you in particular," she returned, laughing ; "I was thinking of men in general. It is natural and proper, I suppose, that your profession should be *the* occupation of your life, and everything else subordinate. With us women it's just the contrary—family first, and all other things afterwards."

"A beautiful old-fashioned doctrine, Miss Nevill."

"Things are none the worse for being old-fashioned," she said, quickly.

"The worse? No; I meant what I said when I called it beautiful. If a thing is good to begin with, the older it gets the better it is."

There was a little pause, and then Dorothea said, in a voice that sounded rather strange to her own ears, for she was treading on unfamiliar ground, "Mr Moore, I wish you had heard Mr Johnson's sermon last night at S. Thomas's."

To her surprise he answered, "I did hear it. But I am not good enough for that sort of thing, Miss Nevill. My practice and his preaching are very far apart."

She turned aside with a half smile on her lips, and said, "Don't you think it's inspiring to see a man who really lives up to his teaching? One feels so certain he means every word he says, and his life *is* the proof."

"Ah! you think that, because you are good. For fellows like me, it's disheartening

to see a man like that. It's too high a level. It is all very well to talk about a failure being really a success, but that does not alter the fact that the thing is really and truly a failure at the time, and you feel it to be one."

"Yes, I know," said Dorothea, and paused. There was a step beyond which she dared not venture, and she hoped he would understand her unexpressed sympathy; besides which, there was a feeling at the bottom of her heart which she had never really probed. Why was it a relief that he was not going to Africa? She was very shy of giving vent to any such sentiment, considering the naval blood she inherited; but presently something of what she felt transpired, and, to her surprise, Hugh seemed quite grateful for her lame little speech, and said he had only just begun to find out how hard it was to leave Eastport.

"I am sorry you are going quite so soon, for another reason," she continued, emboldened by his manner. "I hoped you would have come with us on Thursday."

"Where to?"

"Oh, haven't you heard? I thought mother had told you about it. Sir John Hawker has asked us to drive over to see his place on his drag. We are to have a sort of picnic-luncheon there—you know the house is unfinished as yet—and drive back in the afternoon. It seems rather early for a picnic, doesn't it? But if the weather is nice, I think it will be rather amusing." She faltered rather as she said the last few words, for Hugh's expression was more dark and angry than she had ever seen it. She had never felt frightened of him before; but now she dropped her eyes and could not raise them, though she knew he was looking at her.

"It won't be nice weather," he said at last, in a dry hard voice. "It will be bitter cold, and too long a drive. Don't go, Miss Nevill."

"How can you tell what the weather will be like on Thursday?" she said, flicking at some pink catkins with her whip, and trying to laugh. "Besides, it doesn't depend on me. Mother has arranged it with Sir John."

"Never mind. Don't go," he repeated, earnestly. "Do listen to me. I tell you Hawker is not the man you ought to be seen about with."

"What do you mean, Mr Moore?" she asked, blushing violently, and speaking with a ring of haughtiness in her voice, but still avoiding his eye.

"If you don't understand, how can I tell you?" he said, bitterly. "I only know that it's bad enough anyhow to go—because of you; and to leave you with that fellow

hanging about, is a thousand times worse. Do promise me—promise me, Miss Nevill, that you won't have anything to say to him."

"What right have you to speak in such a way to me?" she cried, with burning cheeks and flashing eyes.

"Right! None, I suppose—none, except that I love you so. I want to keep you, to protect you from every one else, from every one that could hurt you. Oh, don't be angry with me!" he cried, passionately. "I did not mean to take you so by surprise. I could not help it. Oh, tell me you will give me some hope! tell me—"

"Stop, stop! You must not talk like that to me; you have no right. Perhaps you don't know that I have heard; but—but—how can you be free? I am not the first—" The words seemed to choke her, and she stopped short. This time it was Hugh who

quailed before her gaze. He was taken utterly by surprise. His passion had hurried him on, and he had spoken entirely without premeditation. The thought of Clara had never once crossed his mind.

“Not the first,” he echoed; and with a sort of despair it flashed across him that *now* was the time of reckoning, when his folly would be visited on his own head. “Who has told you? What do you know about me—about this story?”

“More than you approve of, it seems,” said Dorothea, almost fiercely; but her eyes were full of tears. She saw his consternation, and it was with a bitter pang that she felt convinced he had no explanation to offer.

When Hugh spoke again, his voice sounded thin and hollow, the light had died out of his face, and with a sort of dogged hopelessness he said—

“What account has reached your ears of

my past follies, of course I can't tell—nor who can have told you ; and I have no right to inquire, or even ask for an explanation. All I know is, that whatever happened in the past is bitterly repented of now."

"And how can I tell that you won't say that again by - and - by ?" she said, with a calmness that cut him like a knife. It was a test of Hugh's devotion that her words, instead of lashing him to a fury, produced only a more hopeless protestation of his love.

"You would not need to ask that if you could see into my heart," he said ; "but I can't hope for your love if you despise me, though you can't cure me of loving you—that I shall do always."

"I don't despise you," she said, more softly. "I am only very, very much disappointed. I thought I could trust you, and that we should always be friends ; and now, now——"

A tear dropped down upon her hand, but she hastily brushed it away. There was a feeling as if the world had suddenly grown black, and for a moment all her faculties seemed suspended. Hugh's voice seemed to come to her from a far distance: she heard his words without realising the sound.

"Oh, don't cry!" he was saying in a tone of anguish. "I ought not to have spoken like this,—fool that I am to have caused you a moment's distress! I am all that you think me, and a great deal worse; but I shall be gone directly, and you can forget all about me. Only don't cry, Miss Nevill, or I can never forgive myself."

Dorothea came to herself with a little shudder.

"I am not crying," she said, proudly. "It is raining; we had better make haste home;" and galloping up to Mrs Fitzgerald, who was a little way in advance, she pointed

to the coming storm, which was indeed beginning to descend sharply.

The rapid ride homewards in the face of the stinging wind and rain was a relief to at least two of the party. The farewells at the doorstep of Admiralty House were of necessity very brief; and Dorothea's avoidance of Hugh's proffered hand, as she was jumping off her horse, escaped observation. She ran into the house, waving good-byes to Nora, and Hugh turned away with a sore heart.

“Never a glance even for friendship’s sake,—and she said we were friends,” he thought bitterly, misjudging, as we so often do in the blindness of wounded feeling, the actions of those dearest to us.

“Good-bye, Nora,” said Hugh that evening, just before he started for Cannes. “I’ve thrown and lost, thanks to your advice; but it can’t be helped. Somebody has been talk-

ing about the Corfu business, and consequently she will have nothing to say to me. I was a fool not to have let things be!"

He was gone before his sister could answer him.

Turning into the station, he almost ran up against Captain Newman, who was coming in an opposite direction. He had not heard of Hugh's summons, and was surprised to see him there and in such a hurry.

"I'm off to town, *en route* for Cannes," Moore said, in answer to the Captain's questions. "My brother is worse, and my father won't hear of my going to Africa, but has sent for me post-haste. I have not a moment to lose." A whistle sounded in the distance. "I don't know when I shall be back; but I say, Newman, do look after Miss Nevill. Whatever you do, don't let her marry that beast Hawker. Good-bye;" and wringing his friend's hand, he was

off before the astounded Captain could frame any reply to the strange request.

When Dorothea came down-stairs after changing her wet habit, she found Charlie had already announced the news of Hugh Moore's immediate departure. She seated herself by the fire, and bent forward to warm her hands, which were as cold as ice, and no one noticed the deep flush on her cheek when Hugh's name was mentioned. All through the long afternoon she was called upon to entertain visitors, who seemed to have chosen that particular day to arrive in endless succession; and not till she came home, after a tedious dinner-party at the General's, where the favourite topic of conversation had been the sudden departure of the charming A.D.C., did she get a single quiet minute to herself, when she could let her thoughts dwell on the startling incidents of the morning's ride.

As a matter of fact, she had been utterly unprepared for Hugh's declaration. Except for those few words on board the flag-ship, which had surprised her at the moment, he had always been very guarded in what he had said to her; and although they had had many long talks together, and had found their tastes and ideas generally in harmony, Dorothea had never stopped to consider whether he was thereby paying her any special attentions—and, indeed, had always thought of him as a man already engaged.

This morning's announcement had come to her with a great shock: first, to her confidence in Hugh, which had been steadily growing ever since she first met him; and then to her own self-esteem. What could she have been about, to have let things get to this pass—that it should make the whole difference in the world to her whether Hugh

• Moore were true or false ? Had he only been playing a part all the while, pretending to care about things that interested her just in order to amuse himself?—compromising himself with a pretty Corfu girl, and then trying his luck with the first girl he came across in England, who was something of an heiress ? Was he only a typical soldier, after all, making use of his opportunities, and as empty-headed as the rest of them ?

Far into the night she sat chewing the cud of bitter reflections—sore-hearted, wounded, and angry, and knowing she must put a brave face on it all by morning light. It never entered her head to take Lady Katherine into her confidence. Her instinct told her that her mother would make it into an occasion of recommending the favoured suitor Sir John Hawker ; and, above all things, she felt that a discussion on that subject was to be avoided — though in a

moment of violent reaction she tried to persuade herself that his straightforward desire to marry her was better, after all, than this hypocrisy of Hugh's.

Poor Dorothea ! the righteous indignation of youth was carrying her far beyond reasonable limits, and in the darkness of a first disappointment she put out her hands to feel who there was whom she could trust. Instinctively she turned with relief to the thought of a faithful friend on whom she had already often relied, and who had never taken advantage of their intimacy to utter one word of anything more tender than friendship.

CHAPTER XIV.

" As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes. . . .
And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along."

THE paragraph which Clara read in an English paper at Paris, and which interested her far more than the foreign telegrams or parliamentary news, was this: "We regret to learn that the Honourable Ion Moore, eldest son of Viscount Glengarn, is lying dangerously ill at Cannes. The doctors pronounce his case to be hopeless."

In Miss Wilson's quick and practical mind the consequences of Ion Moore's death at once shaped themselves. She saw directly that this meant Hugh's promotion—that an elder

son was a much more important person than a younger one, and proportionably difficult to "catch." But so far from being disheartened, it only encouraged her to the attack which she felt was now more urgent than ever. Mr Wilson was anxious to reach England: time was going on, and his holiday would not last for ever; so for once his wishes coincided with his daughter's, and their stay in Paris was a very brief one. London was the next stage, and here the Consul had expected to remain; but Clara was fidgety, and declared that the foggy atmosphere and perpetual gloom depressed her and made her feel ill. It was true that the east winds shrivelled her up as they would have done one of her own native flowers; so she made Ward—who still hung about them, unable to shake off the charm that bound him to her side—persuade her father that Eastport, being on the south

coast, would be milder and brighter,—that they could establish themselves in lodgings, and that he could easily run up and down himself, for any necessary business. The Consul grumbled. “What was the use,” he said, “of going to England, if you meant to settle down at a seaside town and see nobody?” But a glance at Clara’s pale cheeks was enough; and he gave in as usual, without a struggle. He made a feeble attempt to send Ward about his business; but when Jack pleaded humbly for a little more time to make another trial, and said that he must be at Eastport off and on to look after his yacht, what could the Consul say? He had really no power to refuse, after the way Clara had treated her patient lover.

So to Eastport they came, and Mr Wilson took lodgings for himself and his daughter in the sunny terrace that fronts the common, and looks over it to the sea, where you could

watch the breakers dance and sparkle in the spring sunshine as the wind catches them, and drives the spray backwards till it falls again in rainbow-tinted showers.

Jack Ward was obliged to leave them a good deal alone at first—the best thing, perhaps, he could have done for his own advantage ; for as soon as Clara felt herself at all deserted or lonely, she wished him back again, and melted a little in her hardness towards him.

So far, this journey to England had not been a great success. Many a time she was tempted to wish she had not come further than Venice. Was Giovanni still thinking of her, she wondered ? Her thoughts often strayed back to that evening in the balcony. Nothing had ever sounded so sweet in her ears as that whisper of “amore” ; and yet, what was he but a poor painter ? and Hugh would be a Viscount some day.

But the greatest disappointment was yet to come. She and her father were out walking a few days after their arrival, battling up the High Street against the wind, and secretly feeling, both of them, that Corfu was a paradise compared to England, when Clara suddenly caught sight of Charlie Drake. He did not seem at first as if he were going to notice them; but she had no intention of being passed over, and attracted his attention by stopping short in front of him, with a little gesture of recognition. He was startled for a moment, and as the recollection of who she was flashed through him, he apologised for his rudeness. Clara was very gracious—she felt too much pleased to meet any one she knew, to be anything else; and besides, here was the very person who could tell her what she wanted to know. But Charlie was in a hurry, and she found it very difficult to detain him. To tell the truth, he was con-

siderably disgusted at this chance renewal of an acquaintance which did very well at Corfu, perhaps ; but here, at Eastport, it was quite a different thing, and the old Consul did look so confoundedly shabby ! Poor Mr Wilson ! he was pluming himself on being so remarkably well turned out—a new hat, a new coat, even his best pair of boots. A large shirt-front ? Well, why shouldn't any one show as much white linen as they liked ? Happily, however, Drake was too much of a gentleman to show his disgust, though he did turn as much away from him as he politely could, and addressed his remarks to Clara.

“ You have come at a dull time of year for Eastport,” he said ; “ there are no more balls till after Easter, and the place is empty just now. By the by, you knew Moore, didn’t you ? He had to go off to Cannes a few days ago to see his brother, who is very

ill, and he won't be back for some time, I suppose."

"Oh!" said Clara, growing a shade paler, "is he likely to be away long?"

"No one knows," answered Drake; "he went off in a tremendous hurry. I fancy it all depends on the brother."

Clara did not detain him now, as he raised his cap and hastened on. This piece of news took her quite by surprise, and she wanted a little time to think about it.

There was no mistake about its being a blow to her, and her plans were sadly upset. She knew her father would not stay away from Corfu for an indefinite period. Was it any use waiting for Hugh? Should she make up her mind to accept Mr Ward, who was well off, and very devoted to her? Or there was Giovanni, who had fascinated her more than she really knew; but he had no money. Well, she would wait a little, at

any rate. Clara had great faith in possibilities ; and who knew what might turn up to her advantage during a few weeks' stay at Eastport ?

Charlie did not tell Miss Wilson why he was in such a hurry. He was in uniform, and might well be supposed to be engaged in urgent business matters ; but in truth he was hastening back to the dockyard, after executing some orders of his uncle's, to change into civil dress, and join the party on Sir John Hawker's drag.

The expedition had been postponed, for the weather had changed after all, and Miss Nevill had suffered from that wet ride, and had been kept indoors for a few days. Now, however, except for the piercing wind, it was clear and bright,—a sort of day to put you into a thoroughly good humour with yourself and every one else, unless you should happen to be troubled with neuralgia, and

then it was best to regard the world from behind your window-panes.

An indefinable change had come over Dorothea, and Frances became more or less conscious of it, chiefly by reason of the absence of objections to this plan of Sir John's, which hitherto her cousin had opposed in a manner quite after Fan's own heart. She was absolutely passive now about the arrangements; and when Fan, terrified at the very idea, asked her cousin whether she was really going to favour Sir John's suit after all, she only got a faint smile from Dorothea and the ominous words, "Wait and see." Quiescent observation was the last attitude in the world that suited the excitable Frances. For once in her life she was really relieved to find that Captain Newman was to be of the party; on him at least she could reckon as an ally. But how she wished Hugh Moore had not gone! He had a knack

of asserting his position as one of their chosen friends, thereby keeping Sir John at a distance, with truly charming *insouciance*.

Punctually at the appointed hour the drag made its appearance before Admiralty House. Sir John descended from the box, and begged Lady Katherine to honour him with her presence on the seat beside him with as much formality as if he were giving an invitation to a dinner-party. Her ladyship, however, declined the favour.

“I should have liked it dearly,” she said, “only I am so stupidly nervous. I should be so occupied in watching what the leaders were going to do, that I should not be able to speak a word. One of my girls will, I know, enjoy it far better—let me sit behind.”

Sir John had already turned to Dorothea—

“Am I to be so deeply honoured?” he said, lifting his hat and seeking to catch her eye. “You must wrap yourself up well, for

the wind blows through one occasionally.
May I assist you to mount?"

Dorothea's face was inscrutable—so at least thought Captain Newman, who stood watching her. Frances glanced at him; and the expression on her face, coupled with Hugh Moore's mysterious charge, mystified him entirely. It was not possible that Dorothea was being coerced into an engagement with this man? At any rate, *he* could do absolutely nothing in the matter, unless she gave him an opportunity; and to be keenly on the look-out for this opportunity was the sailor's occupation all through that long drive. He was not, therefore, a very lively addition to the rest of the party. Sir John was really a good whip, and had his horses well in hand. After steering through the intricacies of the narrow streets, he was at leisure to talk to his companion, and found her quite ready to be amused. She had been wondering

whether it were possible to get her own feelings as perfectly under control as those four well-bred horses were, and was not sorry to be distracted from her somewhat dreary meditations.

"You have never seen my place, Miss Nevill," he began.

"No, never," she replied; "you are building a large house, are you not?"

"Oh, nothing so very great. I want plenty of room to entertain my friends—political friends from London, don't you know?—people I should not be ashamed to ask you and Lady Katherine to meet." Dorothea did not quite know what he meant, but he went on—"And now, you know, people bring such a lot of servants, that one must make the back part of the house nearly as big as the front; so it comes to a good large place altogether. Twenty or thirty people staying in the house—just a

nice little party of one's own friends,—that's my idea of comfort. Then I am going to have a ball-room, for I hope to give a house-warming so soon as the work is finished, and a great ball to all the county, at which I hope you will do the honours." Dorothea raised her eyes with such a look of blank astonishment that he stammered out a change of expression : "I mean—don't you know?—that you will honour me with your company."

"How cold it is!" she said irrelevantly, shivering a little. Captain Newman was sitting just behind her, and must have heard what she said, for he instantly placed a cloak round her shoulders. She turned and thanked him with the bright sweet smile that sent a thrill all through his veins. Sir John saw everything behind his eye-glass. Miss Nevill never looked at *him* like that.

A drive of an hour and a half brought them to their destination, and Sir John kept

the conversation pretty continuously turned on himself and his proceedings during the whole of that time. The entrance led through an imposing gateway, a little less new than the house, which peered over the crest of an undulating park, a forest of chimneys and Belgium turrets. Sir John swept up the drive, and brought his team to a stand-still under a grand portico, where the door stood open to receive his guests. Everything was of course unfinished, but bore traces of lavish expenditure : there were young plantations in every direction, but it was evident that years must elapse before the place could look really habitable and comfortable. The most homely-looking part of the whole seemed to be the orchard, a relic of the days when an ivy-covered tumble-down farmhouse occupied the site which was now covered by this brand-new palatial residence ; and it was a relief to turn from the

glaring bricks and mortar to the grey gnarled tree-trunks, with their twisted stems and moss-grown branches.

A sumptuous luncheon was served in the unfurnished dining-room, and afterwards a solemn procession followed Sir John over the whole domain—half amused, half bored by his lengthy explanations and elaborate consultation as to various kinds of decoration. Frances soon grew restive, and she and Charlie amused themselves with chasing one another round the bare passages and empty rooms, and up and down the resounding stairs. Everything comes to an end at last ; and Lady Katherine, completely exhausted, said she would rest in the dining - room, where a few sofas and easy - chairs had already found their way, while the others went round the garden. Sir John now attached himself exclusively to Miss Nevill, and took her round to see the stables.

“See,” he said, “I have allowed a dozen boxes for hunters, so that I may be able to mount my friends sometimes. Do you like hunting, Miss Nevill?”

“Oh, very much when I get it; but I am not supposed to hunt.”

“Not unless you have some gentleman in charge of you, perhaps? Well, your parents are quite right to take the utmost care of such a precious daughter. But if, for instance, I were there to look after you, then perhaps—”

“And loose-boxes too,” she interrupted hastily, wishing with all her heart that some of the others would appear. “How comfortable they must be! I always envy the horses which have loose-boxes—don’t you?”

“I don’t envy anybody or anything just now,” he said, “when I have you by my side—my idea of perfect bliss—”

“Oh, there are the others!” said Dorothea, with a gasp of relief, as Frances and Captain Newman came round the corner, her cousin exclaiming, “Oh, Dolly, I have been hunting for you everywhere; what a time we have kept Aunt Katherine waiting!”

Sir John’s face grew black with wrath and disappointment, which he was not sufficiently well-bred to conceal. To be foiled just at this moment, when he was about to touch the summit of his ambition—when the object for which he had laboured so long, and to secure which had been the cause of this very expedition, seemed just within his grasp (for it had never entered into his calculations that Miss Nevill could refuse his offer)—was more than he could bear with equanimity. But, for Frances, the point was gained. She cared not a jot for his exhibition of temper, and extreme unwillingness to enter into conversation with her. She absolutely contrived

to make him accompany her back towards the house, chattering and laughing all the while in a state of feverish excitement, hardly realising the importance of her bold manœuvre in her delight at rescuing her cousin, as she thought, and foiling Sir John. Captain Newman, meanwhile, walked silently by Dorothea's side. The latter was surprised at the combination of her cousin and the Commander, wondering vaguely how they had got together at that particular moment; but she was too full of relief at the escape from that dreadful crisis, which she had been trying so earnestly to avoid all the day, to be able to frame any very definite ideas, or indeed to break the silence, which her companion felt to be terribly embarrassing.

The facts were these: Frances suddenly discovered, in the act of running races up and down the terrace with two little woolly

puppies, that Dorothea was missing, and, with an added pang of alarm, Sir John Hawker also. Charlie was nowhere to be seen either. So she rushed up to Captain Newman, who was pacing along a side-walk with an abstracted air and grave face, exclaiming, "Oh, Captain Newman, where is Dorothy? Do come with me and find her. She must be at the mercy of that horrid man. Come quick, and let us hunt them out!"

He stood quite still, however, his face perhaps a shade paler than usual, and looked sharply into Fan's face as he said, "Are you sure you know what you are about? Do they want to be disturbed?"

"Disturbed!" she cried, stamping her foot, and almost crying. "Don't you see, Dolly has nobody to help her? If you won't come, I must go alone. I know what Dolly wants, if no one else does." The tears were standing in her sparkling eyes, and she turned hastily

away. Captain Newman was by her side with one stride.

“They are gone round by the stables,” was all he said, and showed her the shortest way.

“So stupid of Charlie!” she cried breathlessly, as they hurried along. “He ran off somewhere just when I most wanted him.” And they turned the corner, Captain Newman slackening speed as the pair they were in search of came in sight.

Dorothea’s continued silence made the Commander feel more and more uncomfortable. It seemed utterly impossible to talk common-places, and yet *he* could not begin to refer to what had just taken place. For the second time that day he felt a little doubt as to her feelings, and as to how much he could trust Miss Drake’s assurances : perhaps this sudden interruption of the *tête-à-tête* had been, after all, an entire mistake ; and how on earth could he frame an apology ?

At last, however, the spell was broken by Miss Nevill saying, quite simply, "You can't guess how thankful I was to see you at that moment, Captain Newman;" and then, with a hard little laugh, she added, "I hope Fan is enjoying herself," for the sound of her cousin's voice and rather noisy laughter reached them as they slowly followed the pair in front of them towards the house.

But still Captain Newman felt at a loss how to talk to her. She had been so unlike herself all day—so uncertain even in her manner to Sir John Hawker; and he had noticed also her studied avoidance of the mention of Hugh Moore and his sudden departure. He had hoped so earnestly that some words of hers would have thrown light on that mysterious communication of the young soldier's; and yet how could he help her if she did not take him more into her confidence? Her manner all the while said

so much more than her words, that he felt bound to continue in his attitude of silent protection, watching for every indication which would show him how to proceed.

Frances left Sir John to her aunt as soon as they reached the house, and the indignant lover seized the opportunity for a little private conversation with Lady Katherine. He told her how he had often contrived, after some trouble, to secure Miss Nevill for a *tête-à-tête*, but that they had never been together for five minutes before they had been interrupted by Captain Newman. He would have thought nothing of it, he said, had it only occurred once, but the same thing had happened over and over again. He had noticed perpetually at dances, that whenever he spoke to Miss Nevill, Captain Newman was at her elbow; that constantly, when he had begged for a dance, Captain Newman had claimed it for his own. In short, things

had come to such a pass, that if he were in any other country but England, he must have called him out; as it was, he could only appeal to Lady Katherine as to whether such conduct was becoming in an officer, and above all, if she were aware of the fact, and approved of it.

Lady Katherine was genuinely astonished. She was not at all quick-sighted in such matters, and it had never occurred to her to be alarmed at her daughter's intimacy with Captain Newman. But now, of a sudden, all the little events of the past winter seemed to stand before her in startling distinctness. Making every allowance for the exaggeration of a jealous and not very successful lover, the facts he had stated were more or less true. Captain Newman had appeared at every ball to which they went, and he had danced a good deal with Dorothea, and very little with any one else. What she had re-

garded as respectful friendliness, and nothing more, now wore an air of intolerable presumption and unwarrantable familiarity. Could it be possible that Dorothea liked him? It was at her special request that he had been of the party that very day. But no! she could not believe her daughter to be so deficient in the sense of what was fitting. She would, however, caution her on the subject.

To tell the truth, Lady Katherine's mind, never capable of containing more than one idea at a time, had been entirely engrossed with the notion of Sir John Hawker's wooing of her daughter; and great was her astonishment and dismay to discover, as she thought, what had been going on. She only said, however, in her most dignified tones, "I think I may answer for it, Sir John, that you shall have no further grounds for complaint."

Charlie Drake was the only member of that little party who had no *arrière pensée* as they started on their return drive. Frances took her aunt's breath away by dancing up to Sir John, and saying in the most resistless manner possible, "Please, Sir John, do take me on the box going home. I love seeing the horses so, and I know much more about them than Dorothy."

It was impossible for the disconcerted lover to refuse the request made in such a manner by Miss Nevill's cousin; and it was wonderful to see the equanimity with which Frances bore the scolding which her aunt administered to her, as soon as she had the chance, on her forward and unbecoming behaviour,—but that was deferred till they got home.

For the present, fate was favouring the brave. The two gentlemen had the outside places on the seat behind the box, with Lady

Katherine and her daughter between them—the Commander by Miss Nevill's side, and Charlie Drake by his aunt. Now that she was on the alert, Lady Katherine noticed, with alarmed displeasure, the terms of intimacy existing between the two—an intimacy less expressed in words than in the manner in which they conversed, for a sense of relief that the long day of trying situations was over unloosed Dorothea's tongue, and she gave herself up to the enjoyment of unrestrained conversation with her old and faithful friend. Had she known all that was passing in Captain Newman's mind underneath that calm and carefully guarded exterior, she would have been terribly disconcerted. Perhaps he had never before felt so strongly tempted to try and win this treasure for himself. It was almost more than he could endure, to see her persecuted by Sir John Hawker, compromised by her

mother, and evidently forlorn and unhappy, mutely appealing to him with childlike simplicity for sympathy and protection from troubles which she was too delicate to put into words. And yet, all the way home, he was haunted by a certain glance of Hugh's eyes, which told him so much more than his words had done, and imperatively commanded him to wait, at any rate before putting his own fate to the touch. On the other hand, what right had Hugh Moore, or any one else, to stop him? Was it not rather a vague sense that by betraying his real feelings just then to Dorothea, he would be selfishly withdrawing the strong right hand of friendship, on which, in her trouble, she was leaning so confidently, and thereby making her path tenfold more difficult to follow than it was already? All the time she was talking, he was balancing this question, so full of import to himself, in his mind; and finally,

with the rare instinct of unselfishness, decided against his own interest, determining, at any cost, to wait for the present, and watch the course of events.

Lady Katherine, meanwhile, had plenty of time for her own observations; for Charlie did not think it his duty to make much conversation for his aunt, and was for ever chiming in with Fan's remarks to Sir John, which were generally of a horse or dog character, and provocative of endless discussion.

At last the drag entered the dockyard, and was about to draw up triumphantly before Admiralty House, when they caught sight of a carriage which was blocking the way.

“It’s only a fly,” said Charlie.

“Fancy a wretched fly interfering with your sweep!” said Frances, mischievously, to Sir John.

“A wretched fly!” cried Dorothea, bending forward quickly. “It’s Mrs Fitzgerald,

and, I do believe, Mr Fitzgerald too. How lucky we are back in time!"

"Who did your cousin say it was?" said Sir John Hawker to Frances in a low tone.

"The Fitzgeralds—Mr Moore's sister and her husband. She was expecting him back from California, you know, and he was to arrive any day."

"Oh yes; I think I heard," said Sir John, a shadow of that former curious expression passing across his face.

It was quite evident, Frances thought, that he did not like the Fitzgeralds, and she chuckled a little to herself when she heard him refusing her aunt's very cordial invitation to come in to tea. Lady Katherine thought he had not got over his annoyance at Captain Newman's behaviour; and the Commander could not help observing that her manner to himself had suddenly become very frigid. She did not even ask him in to tea; and

though Dorothea supplied the omission with warm friendliness, he would not take advantage of the daughter's kindness to force himself where he was apparently not wanted.

"We shall see you on Tuesday," Dorothea called after him as he was turning away; and he raised his hat in response.

Nora was in a state of perfect bliss, now her lord and master had returned; and he certainly looked deserving of her homage. He was of that fine type of Irishman that one sees sometimes—very tall and powerfully built, his naturally fair colouring much reddened by exposure to tropical suns, and his eyes a deep blue of truly Celtic clearness. He was very proud of his little wife, and loved her with a passion only second to his rage for adventure—a taste which, it was to be hoped, the weight of years might eventually tame. He had plenty of thrilling stories of his late expedition to

tell when the first explanations as to his arrival had been got over, and was holding his audience in breathless attention when the distant sound of the door-bell was heard. That door-bell had a trick of resounding in the drawing-room in a manner which Charlie had often characterised as one of the greatest advantages of Admiralty House, because no one could ever be caught napping.

“Goodness ! another visitor !” exclaimed Lady Katherine, whose temper was less serene than usual that afternoon. “Run, Fan, and tell them to say I am not at home.”

Too late ! The bell was already answered by the well-drilled blue-jacket, and in a moment “Mr and Miss Wilson, and Mr Ward,” were announced.

“Who on earth are they ?” said Lady Katherine, in an aside ; but no one could tell her in the momentary confusion.

As they entered, Nora fortunately recognised Jack Ward, who was an old friend of hers as well as of her brother, and she whispered his name to Dorothea. Jack, meanwhile, was explaining to Lady Katherine how he had made friends with her nephew at Corfu; and both of them glanced round instinctively to seek for the Flag-lieutenant, but Charlie was not to be seen. On the first appearance of Mr and Miss Wilson, he had escaped by a side-door; for nothing on earth would have induced him to be responsible for admitting that dirty, snuffy old Consul into his aunt's drawing-room—open though it was to all officials who chose to call upon the Admiral.

In due form Mr Ward introduced Mr and Miss Wilson, and then returned Mrs Fitzgerald's cordial greeting—feeling a sort of relief in the well-bred friendliness of the sparkling little Irishwoman, after Clara's

coquettish familiarity, though he was unconscious of the fact when in actual contact with the girl who had fascinated him. Lady Katherine had seen many foreign consuls in her time, but never a much more dowdy-looking specimen than this one who was now seated by her side. Clara, on the contrary, looked excessively pretty in her walking-dress—her cheeks glowing with a lovely carnation, and the little un-English touches in her dress and manner giving piquancy to her already attractive appearance. She was, moreover, for once in her life, oppressed with shyness; and this timidity supplied just the necessary spice of modest reserve which was so often wanting in her address.

Struck by her unusual beauty, Dorothea stood for a moment gazing at her; and then the word Corfu caught her ear, and in a moment it flashed through her who this girl was. No wonder that Hugh had been smit-

ten with her; and, again, no wonder that she had been the victim of Hugh's fascinations. She herself knew well enough the strength of them. Yes; this was Clara Wilson, the girl whose affections had been trifled with, and whom Hugh had thrown over in order to secure a place in her own heart. With a rush of generous sympathy, and without stopping to consider the correctness of any statements she had heard, Dorothea went forward and held out her hand to this young dark-eyed Southern girl, saying in a voice that was strangely full of emotion—

“I am so glad to see you in England, Miss Wilson. I have heard about you from my cousin, Mr Drake. I hope you like our country as well as Corfu?”

“No, I don't like England very much,” answered Clara, with a directness that was a little startling, “nor does my father either.

Only think what happened just now! We were coming into the dockyard—you call it that, I think?—and the policeman at the gate asked us where we were going; and when we told him, he looked as if he only half believed us, and then said, quite rudely, ‘No smoking allowed.’ You know, of course, papa had his pipe, and Mr Ward was smoking a cigar, and it wasn’t half finished either; and papa put his pipe in his pocket. But wasn’t it rude of the policeman?”

Dorothea laughed, in spite of herself, at this very *naïve* account of her reasons for not liking England, and said—

“ It is the rule, you know; no one may smoke in the dockyard, not even my father.”

She privately thought Clara’s story fully explained the odour of tobacco that pervaded the room; but she did not succeed in convincing her visitor that the dockyard was not

such a terrible and mysterious place as she imagined.

Meanwhile Mrs Fitzgerald was cautiously extracting a good deal of information from Jack Ward, and forming her own conclusions thereon. She possessed in large measure the womanly gift of “intuition”; and in the present case her faculties were preternaturally sharpened by love for her brother. Dorothea’s refusal of him had deeply disappointed her, but she could not bring herself to regard the decision as final. Indeed she was only waiting for an opportunity of sounding Dorothea on the subject, if her friend should ever see fit to show her the smallest opening in her defensive armour. She honoured the girl for the principle on which she had acted, with all her woman’s heart; but she longed also to give her a hint, however trifling, as to the possible mistake she was making in her premisses.

How difficult it is to leave the spinning of our web to Fate's nimble fingers ! And how often we run the danger of breaking the thread, when we snatch it away in our impatience !

However, Mrs Fitzgerald was not slow to perceive that Clara Wilson's presence in Eastport, with Mr Ward in attendance, would be of no small use in her endeavours to set matters straight. What further proof was needed, thought Nora, to show that her brother had only been caught by a designing little flirt, whose subsequent conduct had forfeited any possible claim on him she might otherwise have had ? She found Jack Ward quieter and more depressed than she had ever seen him, and it was not difficult to guess from his manner a great deal that had happened and was still going on.

At last, finding the Consul made no move, she rose to go, saying she was sure that Lady

Katherine needed rest, and by this hint succeeded in carrying off the whole party. She invited Mr Ward to come and see her whenever he felt inclined, adding, "I dare-say we shall meet at this great concert next week—that is, if I am able to go: all my movements depend on my news from Cannes; but Ion was a little better again when I last heard."

"Is there any hope of his recovery?" asked Clara.

Mrs Fitzgerald looked rather surprised. She had not realised that Miss Wilson knew so much about her family.

"The doctors don't give much hope," she said, in a voice that was distinctly repressive; "but doctors are often mistaken."

Clara's face was inscrutable, and she made no reply. Presently their roads diverged, and she said good-bye, adding, as Jack lingered by Mrs Fitzgerald's side, "Mr Ward, you are

not going away? You must come and spend the evening with us."

" May I really ? " he answered, and Nora felt her suspicions were correct.

" Little wretch ! " she said to her husband when they were alone, " she has made a regular victim of poor Jack Ward. But I'll be even with her yet. I won't have my Hugh's life spoilt by a designing, foreign——"

" Gently, my lady," cried Mr Fitzgerald ; " you are always finding out love-stories wherever you go. By the by, who was that queer-looking chap on the box of the drag as we came up to the door ? "

" Oh, that was Sir John Hawker, the Conservative candidate."

" What ! the American fellow you told me about ? "

" Yes. *He* wants to marry Dorothy Nevill too."

" By Jove ! And will she ? "

"Not if I can help it. You know I want her for Hugh."

"I am quite certain I have seen that fellow somewhere," mused Mr Fitzgerald. "I shall remember presently where it was."

CHAPTER XV.

“ Farewell ! thou art too dear for my possessing.”

“ Take my hand, brother, in yours, and seek with me the paths to those heights.”

THE following Tuesday morning, Sir John Hawker might have been seen in earnest consultation with the one nursery-gardener of Eastport. He wanted to order a bouquet, the like of which was not to be seen out of London, if money could produce it. Sir John was pretty well aware that this unpretending but really substantial little tradesman both would and could rise to pressure,—and pressure, therefore, was used.

There was no attempt at secrecy as to who was the intended recipient of that lovely

nosegay, for Sir John Hawker took his place at the entrance of the hall a good twenty minutes before the concert began that evening, nodding and talking to his acquaintances, but not offering his flowers to any of the fair ladies who cast envious glances at them as they passed. He would not run the risk of sending his bouquet to Admiralty House, for fear Dorothea should refuse to bring it with her, but preferred this semi-public presentation, involving, as it did, all but a regular declaration, in the eyes of all the Eastport world. He had not sufficient refinement of feeling even to wonder whether a young lady would not resent being so unexpectedly compromised in public.

The Admiralty House party were almost the last to arrive, as befitted their rank and dignity ; and eagerly did Sir John watch whether Captain Newman were with them : but no ! they had only come a carriage full—Lady Katherine, Dorothea, Frances, and the

Flag-lieutenant. Sir John met them at the door, and, still holding his bouquet, offered his arm to Lady Katherine, and conducted her the whole length of the hall to the first row, where their seats were reserved. She naturally noticed the flowers, and exclaimed on their beauty.

“A mere trifle,” he answered, “hardly worth Miss Nevill’s acceptance; but I thought—ah—perhaps she might like to smell them during the intervals of the music. May I venture ?” he added, bending down to Dorothea, who had seated herself between her mother and Frances, and offering her the fragrant bouquet.

Dorothea was taken by surprise: she coloured scarlet, but there was no possibility of refusing it, and she was obliged to thank him as best she could, under her mother’s eye; but her pride leapt up all aflame at the insult which she felt had been offered to her, and she was cut to the heart at the

thought of what her acquiescence might lead to. It was some time before she recovered her composure sufficiently to attend to the music at all, and then it suddenly flashed across her,—had Captain Newman been witness^{*} of the proceeding?

It so happened that the Commander had been detained late on board the flag-ship that evening, and it was not till the concert was some way advanced that he had reached the hall. All the stalls were then full, so he took a seat in the gallery, which was a good point of view, and from whence he could observe the first row and its occupants as much as he desired. He noted that Sir John Hawker was in attendance on the Admiralty party—that he was making himself agreeable to Lady Katherine, and not unfrequently leaning across to talk to Dorothea, on whose lap a large bouquet was reposing, conspicuous even at that distance; and the sight filled him with a vague uneasiness.

Between the first and second parts he descended to the body of the hall, and braved even Lady Katherine's frigid reception for the sake of a few words with Dorothea. Frances immediately left her seat, signalling to him to take possession of it, while she went to speak to a friend close by; but when he sat down beside her, Dorothea's usual friendly smile was not forthcoming. He half anticipated this would be the consequence of Lady Katherine's determined change of manner; but with a desperate feeling that this might be his last chance of conversation with Dorothea, he resolved to brave it out, and act as if all was as usual. "What lovely flowers, Miss Nevill!" he said; "are they from your garden?"

"Oh no," she answered, and the red flush mounted again to her cheek. "Sir John Hawker gave them to me." Her voice was very low and constrained.

"Sir John Hawker!" said Captain Newman, in a tone of such grieved surprise that it broke down her reserve for a moment. She turned her pleading eyes to him, and he was horror-struck to see they were full of tears.

"I could not help it," she said, and then suddenly drew herself up and turned away. Lady Katherine was occupied in talking to the General's wife; but at that moment she turned, as if to address her daughter, though fortunately her purpose was frustrated by an introduction to a foreign dignitary whom the General had brought up to her. But the glance was enough for a daughter who had not yet declared herself in direct antagonism to the maternal dictates. She addressed some ordinary remark, after she had steadied her voice, to Captain Newman, and the purport of it was certainly not likely to encourage her friend in confidential

communications. But he was not in the mood to take her initiative, and decided to claim an explanation, at least as far as *he* was concerned.

“Miss Nevill,” he said, lowering his voice, and looking down at the hands which were so tightly crushing the bouquet on her lap, noticing a little, perhaps, how they trembled, —“Miss Nevill, tell me if I have vexed you in any way. I need not say it’s the last thing I *would* do; but if I have——”

“No, no, it is not that,” cried Dorothea, quickly; “you must not ask me to explain. Mother was vexed the other day. Oh, can’t you understand? I can’t tell you.” She buried her face in the flowers, trusting that the eye-glass of their donor was for once not scrutinising her with its accustomed vigilance, and longing with all her heart to make an end of this trying scene.

Captain Newman was quite silent: he

understood well enough; it was not that which required explanation. He was just feeling the full bitterness of the fact, that until he had the right to protect her, his friendship was only adding to the miseries Dorothea was undergoing. Once more the old question surged up, “Why not claim his right?” He sat there as if spell-bound, unable to break the silence, which seemed of an hour’s duration, though it was in reality scarcely a minute; and it was Dorothea who was the first to speak. She caught a glimpse of his face, and her conscience smote her for being unnecessarily severe.

“Captain Newman,” she said, with an effort to smile as usual, “here is Frances coming back. Don’t misunderstand me if I seem different; and you must not be quite so kind to me. That is all. If you knew how perplexing it all is——”

The music was beginning again—people

returning hurriedly to their seats, Frances claiming hers. Captain Newman awoke from his dream. Before the end of the concert he had disappeared from the room.

“Did you see him give her that?” whispered Miss Harvey to Clara Wilson, whose acquaintance she had made. “She does not look over-amiable, does she?” They were standing near the door, where the Admiral’s party, with Sir John Hawker still in attendance, were waiting for their carriage.

“Is he going to marry her?” asked Clara.

“It looks like it. I can’t imagine why he is so set on it. If he were to go to London, he might get plenty of richer girls, and as handsome too. She is going off, I think. She is not so pretty as she was.”

“Do many people admire her?”

“Oh, not that I know of. People used to say that Mr Moore was after her, but he

went off all in a hurry to his brother at Cannes. Perhaps he'll propose when he comes back. She'd be sure to have him now, when there's a coronet in prospect. It's my belief he *did* propose before he went away, and she refused him; but an eldest son is different."

"His brother is not dead yet."

"He's dying though. Didn't you see Mrs Fitzgerald was not here to-night? I suppose that's Mr Fitzgerald talking to Lady Katherine. What a handsome man!"

"Mrs Fitzgerald isn't much like Mr Moore. I should be afraid of her."

"Do you know Mr Moore?"

"Yes," said Clara, stifling a sigh; "he was out at Corfu last autumn."

"Oh! Then *do* you think you could get Dorothy Nevill to tell you if he did propose to her or not? I do so want to know. You might talk to her about him, and then she

might tell you quite naturally. Do, there's a dear girl!"

"I don't know," said Clara, doubtfully; "I should not like to ask her,—she has been very kind to me."

"Why, that's just the reason for you to ask! Oh, do take the first opportunity for finding out! I will bless you for it!" said Miss Harvey, excitedly.

"Dorothea," said Lady Katherine as they went up-stairs together, Frances having run on in front, "I think you forgot this evening what I said to you the other day."

"No, mother, I did not," said Dorothea, in a low, despairing voice; "but I don't think he will come and talk to me again."

"Well, be careful," said her mother, somewhat mollified; "I daresay he will take the hint."

"I am sure he will," she replied, bitterly. "I should think he would never come

near me again. It is too horrid, seeming to suggest things which I believe have never entered his head."

"You may trust me for thinking of your dignity, my dear," said Lady Katherine, with a touch of severity in her manner. "Good night."

Dorothea stood and looked after her mother as she turned away to her own room. Why should she not break down this foolish reserve, throw herself on her mercy, and implore her to desist from this persecution about Sir John Hawker? A single touch of softness, the slightest hesitation in the step that was unusually proud and determined, would have brought Dorothea flying after her; but Lady Katherine swept down the passage, never turning her head to see if her daughter had gone or stayed behind, congratulating herself, on the contrary, on having enforced her orders successfully about

Captain Newman, without bringing matters to a crisis with regard to Sir John Hawker—a crisis which she instinctively felt must be avoided till after that gentleman had actually spoken. What still caused him to delay, she could not imagine; but she dared not speak to Dorothea again about her unwillingness to accept his favours, or her cold disdain of his attentions. If *she* had managed to swallow the man's want of refinement for the sake of his wealth and position, what right had her daughter to persist in treating him with such scorn?

Had Sir Edward been at home, Dorothea would have been almost tempted to go downstairs again, seek admittance to his study, and tell him she could no longer endure this odious state of things: to-night's exhibition had brought her to the furthest limits of endurance. But, alas! the Admiral was in London, engrossed with a scientific commit-

tee ; so, after waiting to see the last whisk of her mother's train as she turned into her bedroom, Dorothea slowly continued her progression *up-stairs*, stopping, however, after a moment's hesitation, at her cousin's door.

"Fan, I have come to say good-night to you."

"Why, what is the matter, Dolly ? you look so white and tired."

"I am tired, and my head is aching as if it meant to burst ; and so are my arms too, lugging about this dreadful thing,"—and she threw her huge bouquet on to the floor with a gesture of disgust. ◆

"How dared the old wretch give it you ?" cried Frances, jumping up from the dressing-table with her hair all down her back, and stamping on the unoffending flowers, fragrant even in their crushed and mutilated condition.

"I don't know how he could have dared,"

sighed Dorothea, sitting down on the edge of the bed. "I didn't know what to do; I wish I could have thrown it in his face. I can't think how he *can* go on as he does, when he must see that I detest him. I am for ever snubbing him as hard as I can."

"I can't think either—except—oh, Dorothy, why did you change your manner on the day of our drive? You puzzled even me for a minute."

"That day? Did I change? Perhaps I did it out of spite."

"Spite! Who to? Captain Newman?"

"No. Hugh Moore."

"Hugh Moore!" cried Frances, her voice rising in horror. "Oh, Dolly, Dolly, did *he* speak to you before he went away?"

"Yes."

"And you refused him?"

"Yes."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" groaned Frances.
"What ever did you do that for?"

"Don't speak to me like that, Fan ; I can't bear it. I am nearly distracted to-night, and I can't stand an inch more."

"But what did you do it for ?" persisted Frances. "I thought you liked him."

"I thought he cared—was bound to—Clara Wilson."

"That wretched little foreign thing!"

"Oh, Frances, don't talk like that," said Dorothea, laughing hysterically. "I thought she was going to be very nice, but I am beginning to find her different."

"I should think so—little forward chit—with that Mr Ward always hanging about her ! She'll stick to us like a leech now, I'm certain. And you told poor Mr Moore you would have nothing to say to him because of her ? Well, I do think it was cruel of you—and very bad for him too," added Frances, with profound wisdom.

"But that isn't all yet," said Dorothea.

"I never told you what mother said, after that miserable drive. She actually warned me against Captain Newman!"

"Just what I have often done," remarked Frances, coolly.

"If you are going to be nasty, I shall go away," said Dorothea, starting up from the bed.

"Sit down, sit down," said Frances, pushing her down gently, with her arm round her waist. "What a touchy old thing you are! What did Aunt Katherine say?"

"She was angry because he comes here so often, and talks to me. And you know, Fan, how very kind he has been to me all this winter. And he is such a true old friend—one can trust him completely: it does seem so hard to turn round suddenly, and tell him, as it were, to keep his distance."

"He was talking to you to-night."

"Yes, I know; and mother was vexed at

that. But I was so horrid to him, that he actually asked if anything was the matter ; and I had to give him a sort of hint. I wished I could sink under the earth."

Dorothea gave way at last, and burst into tears. Perhaps she felt the self-inflicted loss of her old friend more keenly just then than anything else.

"Poor Dolly!" said Frances, consolingly ; "it is a Gordian knot which you will have to cut, by refusing Sir John Hawker straight out."

"No, that is just what I want to prevent," cried Dorothea ; "it must *not* come to the point ; and it would not make our conduct any better with regard to Captain Newman, either. My one hope is, that if I can keep Sir John at bay till he gets elected, he will go up to London and forget all about me. There are heaps of other attractions, or something else might happen——"

"Hugh Moore come back, for instance? Oh, Dolly, you would not refuse him a second time?"

Dorothea turned her face away from Fan's searching eyes. "Why should he come back to me again? Men don't do that sort of thing twice, except in novels. Besides, Clara Wilson is here—no doubt with a purpose. She and he will make it up together now, without a doubt."

"I don't believe that for a moment. What! go back to Miss Wilson after he has seen you? He has too good taste for that."

"Nonsense, Fan! he liked her first, and I don't see why he should find me anything—I mean, perhaps he did not know her quite so well. But I must not keep you up any longer. You are a good little thing, Fan;" and she rested her cheek lovingly against that of her brave little cousin, who would

fain have borne all her troubles for her. "I hardly ought to have spoken like this, even to you ; but you won't betray my secret to a living soul. I know you are to be trusted."

"And don't you be downhearted, Dolly," said Fan, whisking away a lurking tear-drop ; "and keep up your courage. When things get to this pitch, they must mend, you know."

There did not seem much prospect of that, however, as Dorothea thought over the present position of affairs during many wakeful hours that night. Over and above the fret and worry of the concert episode, and her break with Captain Newman, she felt a cold chill at her heart when she recollected her parting with Hugh Moore. Looking upon it in the light of her subsequent acquaintance with Clara Wilson, she could not help thinking that she had acted hastily, and with more romance than judgment, in censuring

his conduct so fiercely. The more she saw of Miss Wilson, the less she found to like in her. At first she had been more or less fascinated by her appearance and the innocence of her address ; but Miss Wilson, not slow to take advantage of her kindness, had been to see her more frequently than was by any means becoming after such a short acquaintance—so that Dorothea very soon grew tired of her limited powers of conversation, and, moreover, disliked intensely the kind of bondage in which she kept Mr Ward. Once or twice Clara had asked her questions about Mr Moore ; but Dorothea generally contrived to turn the conversation in another direction, for instinctively she shrank whenever Miss Wilson uttered his name. Mrs Fitzgerald had found her opportunity also, and dropped a hint (when she and Dorothea were one day discussing Miss Clara) as to what *she* thought of the Corfu episode ;

and from all appearances, it seemed only too likely that the sister's version of the story was the correct one. What if she had sent Hugh back to an earlier stage which he had outgrown ? What if in despair, or in pique at her contemptuous rejection, he should really return to Clara, and try to content himself with all that she could offer ? Dorothea felt only too certain that Clara could but drag him down to her own level ; or else, that that part of his nature which was best and highest would revolt when it was too late. And yet, if she were to have that fateful ride all over again, she could give no other answer to Mr Moore. She might couch her refusal in more gentle terms, and give him more opportunity for explaining himself ; but she felt, as strongly as ever, that it was quite impossible for her to think of him while he was entangled—be it ever so lightly—with another girl. Poor Dorothea ! she little

knew that the same kind of struggle was going on in some one else's mind that night.

When Captain Newman left the concert-room, he felt the time was come when he must once for all face his position, and determine his line of action.

Coming hastily out into the street, he met a man who had evidently been waiting for him. "Mr Johnson told me to give you this, sir;" and a note was delivered into his hand. It was a hurried request from the vicar, on the eve of his departure, begging the Commander to spare him five minutes of his time that night, as he was in great need of his assistance in the arrangement of some business, and Captain Newman's advice was the one thing he could depend upon.

Late as it was, such a request could not be refused, and the Commander turned his steps

in the opposite direction to that which led to the landing-steps.

It was a curious contrast, the vicar's study and the brilliantly lighted hall which he had just left. A sort of indiscriminate packing had been going on, as was evident from the confusion of books and pictures and all manner of odds and ends that littered all the chairs and tables. Two candles shed a misty light from the writing-table, where Mr Johnson was seated, and revealed the curious mixture of poverty and refinement which the room presented. Captain Newman had plenty of time to study it all, for his friend, after greeting him with great cordiality, begged to be allowed to finish what he was writing, as one of his parishioners was waiting for it. There were two pictures on either side the fireplace, which still hung in their accustomed places. Captain Newman knew them of old, but tonight they seemed to have a special fascina-

tion for him. They were lovely copies of some of Fra Angelico's angels, with their rapt expression of calm passionless devotion and heavenly joy.

"What a curious fellow that must have been to paint faces like that!" he said, when the vicar, having despatched his business, turned to his friend once more. "How could he imagine anything so utterly different from the expression one sees on human faces?"

"He lived in a cloister, remember; but, for all that, I have seen faces with almost such a look on them. Of course, the wonder is, how he caught the idea of perfect innocence: one can't imagine that expression on a human countenance, unless it is *after* a struggle—and *they* look as if they had never known what trouble meant." There was a pause, during which neither of the two men spoke. Each was occupied with a train of thought suggested by that last remark. The

one man, looking back on the life he was just leaving—on the failures, the disappointments of his ten years' work, and yet with deep thankfulness that it had not been quite all in vain ;—the other on the edge of a struggle, with a golden possibility just within his grasp (so it seemed to him at that moment), could he only feel perfectly convinced that it was right for him to hold out his hand and claim it.

Was it only that faint recognition of Hugh Moore's sentiments that withheld him ? Was it that he believed Miss Nevill reciprocated them—that he was only too conscious how much he himself lacked of that bright youthfulness which was one of Hugh's greatest charms ? Or was it the instinctive feeling of what he owed to himself ? What had he to offer Dorothy Nevill which could in any way justify him in declaring his passion ? He knew perfectly well that he was a man with-

out money, without position, beyond such as his profession gave him, and, in addition, burdened with claims, arising from spendthrift relations, which he was too honourable to think of relinquishing for the sake of any private gratification. The very fact of Miss Nevill's having a fortune of her own made it a thousand times more embarrassing; and, as if all this was not enough, Lady Katherine's recent behaviour showed him but too clearly the sort of reception he was likely to get if he ever dared to approach Sir Edward with proposals for his daughter.

And yet here he was, he hardly knew how, as desperately in love with this woman as a man can be but once in his life. It was impossible to shut his eyes any longer to the fact, that he must either declare himself openly, or keep out of her way for the future.

He started from his reverie when Mr John-

son began to speak about the business he had on his mind. It was a complicated affair, and one that must hinge a good deal on the person who could be responsible for keeping it going. The man on whom the vicar had depended for this, had suddenly been called away from Eastport. “ You are stationary for the present, aren’t you, Newman ? ” he added, after having stated the case broadly ; “ one has got to look upon you as a fixture in these parts.”

“ Well, that is just what I am not,” answered the Commander, slowly. “ I believe I am going to apply for an exchange. I am beginning to think I have had enough of a shore-going berth.”

His friend caught something in the tone of voice which made him glance sharply into Captain Newman’s face. He had risen from his seat, and was standing leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece, looking down

into the dying embers of the fire. Only his profile was visible, thrown into strong relief against the dark shadow of the wall ; but on those still and set features there was a look which betokened an inward struggle, and the clergyman knew it at once.

“There are times when one feels one has been long enough in a place, certainly,” replied Mr Johnson. “I am trying to take that view of the subject with regard to my own departure. Do you feel you are obliged to go? Not that I have any right to ask you such a question, since I know your idea of duty too well.”

“Duty is a stern mistress at times,” said the other, with a smile passing over his face, and then leaving it again as quickly ; “but it is even harder, occasionally, to know which way she is pointing, and how one can best obey her.”

Captain Newman paused for a minute.

It had suddenly flashed across him,—Should he take advantage of this unexpected opportunity, and get the benefit of a man's judgment on a case on which his own brain was sick with thinking? He had come there on business; the conversation had drifted into a personal channel: was this a chance given him, and hadn't he better use it?

"I tell you what it is, Johnson," he said at length—"I want some good sound advice. Will you give a calm and unbiassed judgment, if I state a case to you?" and he rapidly sketched the position of affairs, with an impartiality which did credit to his powers of self-control, keeping his statement so entirely in the abstract, that although his friend had a shrewd suspicion that the matter concerned his questioner pretty closely, he was utterly in the dark as to who were the other actors in the story that was being told him.

When Captain Newman had finished, there was a pause, while the vicar sat back in his chair, his eyes shaded by his hand,—the ticking of the little travelling-clock which stood on the table beside him being the only sound that broke the stillness of the room. There was an intense aggravation about the ticking of that clock, so ceaseless, so pertinacious, so unsympathetic. Captain Newman felt a strong desire to lay violent hands on it, and shake it into silence. But he did not move hand or foot, and presently the vicar looked up.

“ You want an unbiassed opinion? Will you let me say exactly what I think? ”

The Commander signed assent, and his friend continued—

“ There is only one reason that could justify any other course than that of effacing one’s self. I speak as if I was in the position of the man who tells the tale.”

There was no need to say more. Captain Newman knew well enough what that one reason was, but his innate honesty prevented him from listening seriously for a moment to any of those alluring voices which tempted his imagination to rest upon a far sweeter interpretation than the facts of the case warranted. He knew Dorothea did not love him then; whether it was in his power to awaken that emotion in her by the confession of his own passion, was quite another matter—one that he had apparently no business with just then. A sudden flash of light had revealed him to himself; the struggle was over.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ The world’s a room of sickness, where each heart
Knows its own anguish and unrest.”

WHEN Hugh arrived at Cannes, he found his brother confined to his bed. All through that long railway-journey across the Continent, he had had time and leisure to ponder over the recent events of his life, and not least over that letter of his father’s which had been the cause of so much disturbance. Gradually, as the all-engrossing atmosphere of Eastport was left behind, he became convinced that there was more in that letter than met the eye. His mother, he knew, might be unreasonable when Ion was in the

case, but his father would never have summoned him so peremptorily without grave cause; and he began to feel remorse at his reluctance to obey the call—began almost to dread the end of his journey, for fear of the news that might be awaiting him there. And Dorothea? To say that he thought of other things does not imply that he forgot her: rather she was never absent from his mind. A sense of mingled pleasure and pain, the latter perhaps preponderating, formed the background of all his thoughts,—like the pedal-note of a sonata movement, ever the same, while the other parts vary incessantly. He was sorry, bitterly sorry, he had been betrayed into speaking to her. He would have given anything to have parted from her in the calm assurance of at least her friendship and good wishes. He felt, too, that he had practically ruined his chance of success by his precipitancy; and the old

question came back upon him with wearisome iteration, “ Was he bound in honour to Clara Wilson, or was he not ? ”

Lord Glengarn met him at the station, and a few words were sufficient to show him that his fears for his brother were not groundless. Ion was rapidly losing strength from day to day : he might rally again for a little while, but it was practically only a question of a few weeks.

It was very touching to see the sad patience of the old lord as he watched his first-born gradually sinking into an early grave. “ If only it had pleased God to take me instead,” he said, sorrowfully. “ I am an old man, and he was so full of health and vigour a short time ago.”

Hugh could make no answer. His father did indeed look old and broken : he was beginning to go about with a certain droop of his head and shoulders, whereas his carriage

had formerly been as erect as that of his soldier-son ; and there was a tremulousness in his voice and manner which showed how the strain was telling on him.

The little French Sister rather trembled at the idea of the soldier-brother's arrival. She imagined all Englishmen to be burly blustering fellows, at least when they were well and strong, shaking the sick-room with their heavy tread, without an idea how to modulate their tones, or soften the natural *rudeſſe* of their manners. Great was her surprise, therefore, to discover that Mr Moore's brother was the absolute reverse of her preconceived ideas—his step of the lightest, his voice and manner gentle as a woman's, his entrances and exits noiseless as her own, and his presence a perpetual source of soothing and comfort to the invalid. He was never in the way, and treated her with such invariable courtesy and thoughtful con-

sideration that he speedily became a prime favourite; indeed she often permitted him to be with his brother when she was forced to exclude Lady Glengarn herself, whose intense anxiety produced a disturbing and irritating effect on her patient.

She told Hugh he was a "*sœur de charité manquée*," a remark which amused both the brothers very much. As the days went on, Ion grew to depend upon Hugh almost incessantly. Untrained as he was to the exercise of self-denial, he exacted almost more of Hugh's attention than the latter's health would stand; for it mattered little whether it were night or day, directly Ion expressed a wish for his presence, Hugh was there at a moment's notice. The *sœur* had to insist at last upon a prescribed amount of air and exercise; and Hugh, in a dreamy sort of way, submitted to her orders, falling as naturally into the routine of sick-nurse as if he had

never hoped to be fighting in Africa at this very time.

There was a strange solemnity during all those bright, rapidly lengthening spring days, in watching that sad struggle for life going on so silently and yet so intensely in the stillness of the sick-room. Never before had Hugh waited like this for the approach of death — never watched the stealthy, steady advance of the enemy, who only seemed sometimes to retreat in order that he might with one mighty swoop seize the victim at last, and strangle him in his resistless grasp.

He wondered much how he should feel if he were in Ion's place. Would there be passionate longings for the sweets of life, just withheld from his grasp; or passionate regrets for the chances lost? bitter memories and haunting recollections? Would it be hope disappointed, or remorse triumphant? Or could it be possible to die in peace, go to

rest tranquilly, and fall asleep like a child weary with play, or a labourer tired out with toil ? He thought it would be possible—nay, easy—to die gallantly on a battle-field, or patiently of wounds received in the service of his country ; but *could* he be calm and contented if condemned to die like Ion, of a long lingering illness, with daily failing strength, with daily increasing faintness and exhaustion ?

He wondered, too, whether Ion realised his own condition : he had never said a word which could lead any of them to suppose that he guessed his fate was sealed ; but one day, just after the doctors' visit, he startled Hugh by asking him what their opinion was. For a moment Hugh hesitated ; and seeing his embarrassment, Ion went on calmly, “ I suppose they think I am awfully bad. Do they say it is all up with me ? ” Poor Hugh ! it was hard that such a

task should come to him ; yet he could not bring himself to frame an evasion. He only said, " You should not ask me such a question, Ion." His head was between his hands ; he could not face his brother's inquiring gaze. But it was quite enough : such a refusal to speak was as good as a death-warrant ; and so Ion felt it, but he showed no emotion. The truth had been dawning upon him very gradually for some time past, and with the intense weakness and exhaustion came a really merciful weariness of life. The faculties were more or less benumbed ; the keenness of sensation seemed gone ; of physical fear of death there was none, and any deeper feelings were hidden away under an intense reserve, less easy to overcome with his brother than with a comparative stranger.

The nearest approach to any lifting of this veil was one afternoon, when, the two

brothers being alone together, Ion called to Hugh to come close to his side, and said, “I want to tell you that I am glad the old place is to come to you, after all, Hugh. You will look after it better than I should have done. I have been an idle brute, but you will do good service. Don’t let the mother persuade you to leave the army. One is awfully sorry, when it comes to the end, to see what a useless time one has made of it. You won’t have that to bother you when your time comes.” He spoke at intervals, with difficulty ; and when Hugh replied with warm disclaimers, he only shook his head, and continued to give various small directions which he asked his brother to see carried out at Glengarn. Ion Moore had never been such a favourite with the tenants as Hugh : he was apt to be short and imperious in his manner, and to show too plainly that he knew himself to be their future master ;

but he had their welfare truly at heart all the same, and chafed at the narrow means which prevented his plans for improvement from being carried out. Hugh was surprised to find how minutely and carefully he had studied the whole matter, and how much his mind, even now, was occupied with home interests. He talked till he was exhausted on this subject, Hugh making careful note of all his plans and wishes ; but he did not refer to it again, or indeed allude to his past life—nor did he ever express a hope for the future.

It was after such scenes as these, which cut deep down into Hugh's warm heart, that he felt an unutterable yearning for Dorothea's sympathy. The depths of his nature were being sounded, and in his hour of need his heart called out instinctively for the one woman who had power to comfort him.

It was fortunate at this time that chance

threw in his way some old friends whose companionship served to divert his solitary musings. Walking on the pier one day, he chanced to observe a little girl playing with a ball. He watched her idly, till presently the ball bounded close by where he was standing, and fell with a splash into the water below. Hugh made a fruitless dash after it, and turning, saw the little face very crestfallen looking up to him. "I am so sorry," he said ; "it bounded just too quickly." His smile and voice acted like magic on the child. She ran up to him, putting out her hands, and crying—

"Oh, Mr Moore ! is it you ? Don't you remember coming home with us last year ?" Then Hugh recalled his little friend on board the Austrian Lloyd ; and the child led him up to her mother, who was spending the winter at Cannes with her husband and children. Mrs Vivian was languid and gen-

tle as ever, but she was unfeignedly glad to see Hugh, and to renew their pleasant acquaintance. Mr Vivian joined them shortly afterwards, and from that day a considerable intimacy sprang up between them. In his grand sedate fashion he took a great fancy to Hugh, who, on his part, was fascinated by Mr Vivian's diplomatic mind, and the peculiar cautious deliberation with which he approached all subjects. The young soldier's simplicity and directness, joined to his military enthusiasm, interested the diplomatist greatly. He regarded Hugh as a useful study—one more “type” to be carefully analysed and put by in the storehouse of his memory. Like many another clever man, he was a little too apt to generalise; but he read Hugh's character as if it had been an open book, and liked him none the less for his transparency. Before they parted, he resolved to make him an offer of a post which

was to fall vacant in a few months, and which was practically to be filled according to his recommendation.

Hugh had been telling him how, if it had not been for his brother's illness, he would have been in the thick of the African campaign.

"Well," said Vivian, "you have not lost much there. What glory can be gained by trampling down a whole lot of savages? Besides, I hear they are going to patch it up somehow with a compromise."

"Compromise!" exclaimed Hugh, in a tone of disgust.

"You are quite right," said Vivian, answering his thoughts; "a compromise very seldom answers—never with savages. It is, in fact, a treaty only kept till one of the parties is strong enough to break it. We are so mighty magnanimous nowadays that we prefer to make compromises rather than

settlements. But I was going to say, if you want to rough it, I can get you the offer of a post, where you will have a much better chance of distinguishing yourself. There is going to be an Armenian Boundary Commission in a month or two's time : we shall have two or three men on it who know the people and the country well—engineers and suchlike ; but we want a soldier too—and if you like it, I think you would be the very man."

"It is very good of you," said Hugh, warmly, "but I don't know any of these Eastern lingoës."

"As to that, you would soon pick up enough to get along ; besides, you'll have a man with you to act interpreter if necessary. They will only need some military advice and experience to keep them straight in sundry particulars. It is a wild country, and perhaps this Commission may not last

very long ; but it would be certain to lead to something further, if the work were done as well as I feel sure you would do it. Consider it an open question, Moore, for the present," added the Secretary kindly, recollecting the cloud that was resting over Hugh's prospects just then ; "the post need not be filled up for two, or perhaps three, months hence."

Lord Glengarn was deeply gratified by the confidence shown in his son, and Hugh felt more hope and interest in his future than he had done for some time past.

That evening he received a letter from Nora Fitzgerald. It contained an account of the concert, transmitted by her husband, and it mentioned for the first time that Mr and Miss Wilson were at Eastport.

Nora wrote capital letters, full of chit-chat, and always containing just the news her correspondents wanted to hear ; but occasionally her pen ran away with her, and she said more

than she intended. It was so in this case. She had made up her mind not to mention the fact of the Wilsons' presence on any consideration, and it was not till her letter was well on its way to Cannes that she remembered how her own hand had let the cat out of the bag. Of course the mischief—if mischief it were—was done. But Hugh's thoughts did not dwell much on Clara Wilson just then. He was a good deal more disturbed by another sentence in his sister's letter.

“Dorothy Nevill is looking quite ill, and unlike herself,” she wrote; “and well she may, with Sir John Hawker always in her train. I have not seen much of her, and I almost fancy she avoids me.”

She went on to talk of her husband, who appeared, she said, to have left his heart behind him on the other side of the Atlantic, for he was always writing immensely long letters with American addresses, and receiv-

ing most formidable-looking replies. She believed, however, his correspondents were male, not female, and she hoped there was nothing very wicked going on, although he refused to let her know anything about it. Hugh remembered this remark a few weeks later, but at the time it fell very flat. What did he care about Willie Fitzgerald's correspondence? But he did care a great deal about Miss Nevill.

Nora was not left very long without an answer, and found that, in order to please her brother, she must endeavour to see more of Dorothea, and that she must also keep him informed of Mr and Miss Wilson's plans and prospects. But the intriguing little Irishwoman never for a moment guessed the course of action Hugh had resolved to pursue, directly his sad task was over at Cannes. How, and in what manner, he arrived at his determination, he did not know

himself; but, at all risks, he felt that his own line of conduct must be made clear: he owed it to Clara Wilson to discover if she meant to hold him to his demi-semi-engagement or not. There could be no longer any subterfuges, any evasions. Living, as he was just then, in the face of the great realities—looking at life, as it were, from the finished side—anything short of a perfectly straightforward course seemed to him insupportable. Of course it was terribly tantalising to be obliged to leave it all alone for the present,—to feel that any day Sir John Hawker might, by force of persistency, secure his prize—that he himself might never have the chance of explaining his own conduct to Dorothea. He was disappointed, too, that Captain Newman had taken no notice of him since he had left. But, after all, what was there which the Commander could have told him? He did allow himself the indulgence of imploring

Nora to use her utmost influence with Miss Nevill against Sir John Hawker; for he dreaded inexpressibly such an alliance for Dorothea, quite apart from the effect it would have on his own prospects. But for the rest? He could banish it all from his mind, of course, when watching by his brother's side; but still there were hours of torture which he could only struggle through as best he might. The trial was naturally aggravated by the fact of his own overstrained condition; but sometimes he laughed when he thought, "And I fancied myself in love with Clara Wilson!"

Mrs Fitzgerald's next letter was full of the scandal caused at Eastport by the curious habit Miss Wilson persisted in of taking Mr Ward about everywhere as *cavaliere servente*: "People wondered what it *could* mean, if it was not an engagement." She did not know what a sting her words

carried to Hugh. He thought he could tell quite well what it meant—that Miss Wilson considered herself so effectually pledged to himself that she could afford to let Jack Ward philander as much as ever he liked, since he, too, could not be ignorant of Clara's feelings.

"Mr Wilson tries the Admiral's patience almost beyond bearing," continued his garrulous correspondent. "Can't you imagine how bored they all are with this stupid, smoky Corfu Consul, and how kind and patient Miss Nevill is with this insufferable little Clara? I think she had made up her mind to like her at first through thick and thin, but she is finding out her mistake now rapidly. She cannot stand her bold attempts at 'carrying on' with the Flag-lieutenant, though I think she is rather grateful to her for trying to attract some of Sir John Hawker's attentions to herself.

People even say she has designs on the hard-headed Radical candidate if he succeeds, as I think he will, in his electioneering campaign."

Hugh closed the letter with a bitter smile. Perhaps he was a little hard on his sister just then. Her chatty letters, intended to cheer him and keep up his spirits, jarred upon the atmosphere of that sick-room, where every day the struggle was growing fainter. Nora had never been anything to Ion in the days gone by. She had married at eighteen, and before that, had been away from home, educated with some cousins in London; and since she had possessed a home of her own, she had been quite engrossed by her children—and especially by the delicate boy, whom she never left, and for whose sake chiefly she was now at Eastport. It had been under discussion whether she could for

once leave her family and join her parents at Cannes; but from one cause and another she had found it impossible to get away, and no one for a moment imagined that Ion could have lingered so long.

As so often happens, the end came rather suddenly at last. It was April now, and very warm weather. The window would be thrown open sometimes, and Ion would lie by the hour, scarcely speaking, gazing at the sky, with the soft floating clouds and the white sea-birds hovering over the bay. Then came a few days of great suffering, when he recognised no one but his brother, and Hugh was hardly ever out of his room—realising, for the first time, the intense and futile longing to bear another's pain. But at last this most trying period passed away, and left Ion utterly exhausted, though perfectly calm and conscious.

“He is better to-night,” said Hugh.
But the *sœur* shook her head. “There
is no strength,” she said, sadly.

Ion called for them all to say good-
night, and then seemed inclined to fall
asleep; but before the dawn, Hugh, who
was watching, roused the Sister. The
change had come.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Proud was his tone, but calm ; his eye
Had that compelling dignity,
His mien that bearing haught and high,
Which common spirits fear."

ADMIRALTY HOUSE was nearly empty, for it was Saturday afternoon. Sir Edward was taking Lady Katherine for a long drive, and Charlie and Frances were riding. Dorothea had a cold, and was at home. She was not looking her best just then. She said the spring weather was trying : she was unused to it in England, having been so much abroad at that time of year. It would have been nearer the truth had she recognised the fact that it was her mental worries which had most to do with causing the languor and

depression that seemed to take away the spring of life within her. Things were in very much the same position as they had been a month ago, except that Sir John's suit was not progressing as rapidly as it had threatened to do. Dorothea had been paying one or two short visits to her relations; and since she had returned home, a heavy cold had kept her indoors. A quiet afternoon was a luxury not often granted her; and she sat down for a long practice at the grand-piano, in the big empty ball-room. Presently her energy was exhausted; her hands fell idly on her lap, and she took to dreaming. Her eyes wandered across the long bare room, through the wide glass door into the garden, where the shrubs were beginning to be tinged with green and the lilac-blossom was scenting the air. She was humming softly to herself a little German air. It was the *Volkslied* she had

sung to Hugh Moore on board the flagship :—

“ Wenn Menschen auseinander geh’n
So sagen sie: Auf Wiederseh’n—auf Wiederseh’n.”

At that moment the folding-doors into the drawing-room were thrown suddenly open, and the footman announced “ Miss Wilson.”

“ What, *again!* ” groaned Dorothea to herself, as she slowly rose from the piano; “ can’t I have even this afternoon in peace? It is too bad. I really shall have to snub her; ” and she accordingly walked into the drawing - room and received Clara with a certain cold dignity, which she knew well enough how to assume on occasions.

As a rule, Miss Wilson was quick to notice any change of manner; but to-day she was preoccupied. She had never, up to this time, been able to extract any information from Dorothea with regard to Hugh Moore; but now she had come determined to ask a

downright question, and insist on an answer. She felt a crisis was approaching, and she must know exactly where she stood.

She had seen Hugh.

As may be supposed, there was every reason to prevent Hugh from wishing to linger at Cannes after his brother's funeral; but his mother had so completely broken down when the long strain of anxiety and nursing was over, that he could not find it in his heart to be in a hurry to leave either her or his father, who had grown to lean so much upon his sympathy and companionship,—and so two or three weeks had elapsed before he felt himself at liberty to go back to Eastport.

Mr Vivian had repeated his offer just before his departure for England, and had asked for an answer in a fortnight. This fortnight must therefore decide his fate. If he went to the East, he could not take a

lady with him ; but he must settle his affairs definitely before starting.

From the quiet atmosphere of his brother's sick-room—from the wonderful peace of that beautiful churchyard—it was a great change, and a great descent, to turn to such questions as were now claiming his attention. But Life is jealous of Death, and will allow no long interval of retirement. Ion's work was done. Hugh had to close the door on his chamber of rest, and buckle on his own armour afresh. Never till he stood for the last time by the side of that freshly made grave in the sunny English cemetery, did he realise how he loved his brother ; and then he turned away, to travel northwards to work and worries.

And the day after his arrival at Eastport he met Clara.

She was rather afraid of him, especially now that he looked older and so much graver

than he used to do when she had first known him. But he did not shrink away from her ; on the contrary, he stopped to speak with grave courtesy, and asked if he might come and see her the next day.

She told him graciously when she would be at home, and went on her way triumphant, feeling her confidence restored, and certain that she had not lost her influence over him.

In the full glow of her satisfaction she went to see Dorothea; and had hardly seated herself before she exclaimed,—“Who do you think I met on my way here? You will never guess. Mr Moore.”

Dorothea started a little.

“Oh,” she said, coldly, “I did not know he had come back.”

“Nor did I, till I saw him. However, he stopped and spoke to me, and said he was coming to see me to-morrow.”

The tone of satisfaction was evident. Dor-

othea said nothing, but her breast was heaving with mingled emotions. Clara went on, after a moment's pause—

“I have got a question I meant to ask you, Miss Nevill. I hope you won't be angry. Did Mr Moore ever ask you to marry him ?”

Dorothea turned upon her fiercely.

“How dare you ask me such a question ?” she said, her lips turning white. “What right have you ? What on earth can make you think I could stand such——” she was going to say “impertinence,” but Clara broke in with—

“Don't be angry,—half inclined to cry herself at this outburst; “I really am asking you for a very particular reason—because—because, you know, he asked me once.”

Dorothea was rather ashamed of herself by this time, and had calmed down. She answered quickly, “Yes, I thought so.”

"But you're not engaged to him?" persisted Clara.

"No."

"You refused him?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" with a great gasp, "how could you? Why did you?"

"Well, to be perfectly frank, I thought he had no right to ask me—that he cared for you."

"Did you?" said Clara, blushing and smiling, and looking very pretty. "Did you know why he left me at Corfu like that?"

"No."

"Because papa wouldn't allow it. But now it is different. You see he is the eldest son now."

"Really, Miss Wilson," said Dorothea, restlessly, "I don't see what difference that makes."

"Oh, don't you?" said Clara, laughing

lightly ; “ I do. However, now it’s all right, and he’s come back ; so perhaps things will come round, after all. Only, he must make haste. I can’t persuade papa to stay on here longer than next week, so he has only come just in time. Perhaps,”—rather archly,—“ you are just a little wee bit sorry I am still here ? Well, good - bye, dear Miss Nevill,”—kissing the unwilling cheek, which was cold as marble,—“ I shall see you again before I go.”

Dorothea submitted to the effusive farewell. She could not return it, and moved aside to ring the bell. Her heart was sore, and very heavy. Was this really, really to be the way in which everything was to “ come round ” ? Was it possible that Hugh could ever have loved, did still love, this silly, shallow-minded, selfish little girl ? And she could not see him—could not hear a word of explanation—could not listen to his voice

telling something of what he had been going through lately (how she had followed it all in her heart !)—could not even hope to meet him, for in his deep mourning he would not be going out; and besides, he was to see Clara to-morrow, and after that, she would rather not see him—for a long time, anyhow. She was too much pained to reflect that, after all, he was only taking the very path of honour she had herself shown him. She only felt the sharp sting caused by the recognition that Clara was his first thought. *She* had waited for him, and was to have her reward; while the girl who had rejected him so hastily could only sit idly at home, sick at heart, longing helplessly, hopelessly, for an explanation, which the cruel hand of fate denied her.

Many a time lately she had felt lonely and deserted. Mr Johnson had left some weeks before. Captain Newman had kept his distance, to the extent of winning even Lady

Katherine's approval,—would, in fact, have gone on leave, were it not that he was just then tied to his ship by an Admiralty commission. Sir John himself was so much occupied in paying court to his constituents (as he hoped to call them some day), that he had little time to bestow on softer wooing (this latter was not a matter of regret to Dorothea, however). And last, but not least, Mrs Fitzgerald, in the first days of her mourning, was seldom visible; and for at least a fortnight Dorothea had been entirely without news of Hugh.

Her sad reveries were not of long duration, however. Miss Wilson had not been gone ten minutes before the door opened once more, to admit the very person who had been last in her thoughts. It was the first time Mrs Fitzgerald had come to the house since her brother's death.

“I heard you were alone,” she said, greet-

ing Dorothea affectionately, “so I thought I might come in and see you. You have been so good in calling at the hotel; but I have been so poorly with a cold, I was not fit to see anybody. And how are you, my dear? You do not look very bright.”

“I am suffering from the same complaint,” answered Dorothea, smiling rather faintly. “It is very kind of you to come. I have just had another visitor—not a very pleasant one——”

“Oh, I met her. That horrid little Miss Wilson!”

“You had better take care,” said Dorothea, with a little laugh at her own boldness; “she told me she had just met your brother.”

“Poor old Hugh! Yes, he is back. But what of him?”

“Do you want me to tell you what she said?” and there was a curious look in

Dorothea's eyes as she lifted them to Mrs Fitzgerald's face.

"Yes—certainly," answered Mrs Fitzgerald; "but no; on second thoughts, pray don't—for I know beforehand. I can guess quite well, and know it's all false. She wanted to make you believe that Hugh was at her feet, I have no doubt. But you know him too well to believe such nonsense, Dorothy?"

"I don't know what to believe. I think the world is upside-down," said Dorothea, sadly; and then, pulling herself together, added more lightly, "*I must tell you what Miss Wilson said.* She told me Mr Moore had met her, and asked if he might come and see her to-morrow. She told me distinctly he had proposed to her once, and no doubt he is still in love with her. I don't see why they should not make it up together. The difficulties, it seems, were on her father's side; and she appears to think

that they are now all done away with. So —you will have to make up your mind to be civil to your sister-in-law, after all!"

"I don't believe a word of it," cried Mrs Fitzgerald, all the more energetically because she was, in her heart, considerably discomfited by what Dorothea had told her. "She's a designing little wretch, and thinks she knows how to play her cards; but if the worst comes to the worst, she will find she has met her match this time. *I* am not going to let poor old Hugh fall into her clutches. He wants a little petting, poor boy. He looks quite old and altered by all this nursing. You can't think how it has told on him; and he feels Ion's death dreadfully—much more than I do," she added, with candour that was almost startling. "Hugh was always my own particular brother, you know. Ion was so many years older, and I have never been much with him—of late,

especially. But Hugh——” and there were volumes of love in the way in which the impulsive little Irishwoman lingered on that name.

She stayed on some time, talking chiefly about all that had been happening at Cannes, which she had gleaned from her brother’s conversation, and discussing the feasibility of Lord and Lady Glengarn’s coming presently to Eastport, in order that they might be cheered by the company of the grandchildren ; and then the distant sound of voices warned her to depart, if she did not wish to be caught for “company tea.”

“Good-bye, dear Dorothy,” she said, kissing her ; “and mind you don’t credit Clara Wilson’s idle tales. If Willie calls here this afternoon, will you tell him I am gone home?”

A minute later, and Sir Edward and Lady Katherine entered the room, bringing with them Sir John Hawker. He was in high

spirits at his electioneering prospects. The sitting member had at last accepted the Chiltern Hundreds ; and after endless delays, which had tried the patience of both the candidates, the writ had been issued, and the election was to take place the following week. The town was placarded all over with, “Hawker for ever ! Vote for Church and Constitution !” and, “Vote for James, the People’s Candidate ! Reduced Taxation, Local Government, and Liberty!”—and other startling announcements. The general impression was in favour of the Blue, however ; and Sir John himself declared he felt certain of success.

The Admiral told him, laughing, that he must not come near them again till the election was over.

“ I shall be hauled over the coals for using undue influence, if I don’t take care,” he said. “ No politics in the navy, you know. We

may have our private opinions, but we ain't allowed to show them openly—and quite right, too."

Sir John protested that such banishment was very hard. He had seen nothing of them lately. He wanted "the encouragement of ladies' smiles while fighting his battle." Miss Nevill gave him only the veriest ghost of one, which she felt was demanded of her by necessity; and poured out the tea in silence, only brightening up when Mr Fitzgerald arrived. The latter gentleman settled himself down comfortably by her, and informed her in a whisper that he intended to stay as long as Sir John Hawker did. Sir John, on his part, tried to outstay Mr Fitzgerald; so the visit threatened to be a very long one.

From constantly meeting at Admiralty House, Sir John had perforce become accustomed to the Irishman's presence; but

he writhed and fidgeted under his piercing gaze, like a bird fascinated by a snake. Dorothea always noticed it, and at last she took occasion to ask Mr Fitzgerald the reason of such a curious phenomenon.

“ You don’t make *me* uncomfortable when you look at me,” she said, laughing.

“ The reason is not far to seek,” he replied. “ You have a good conscience ; he hasn’t. I know rather too much about him, that’s all.”

“ Why, have you known him before ? ”

“ Rather ! Years ago, in California. We saw a good deal of each other.”

“ But he said he had never been in California ! ”

“ He said what wasn’t true, I’m afraid. Never mind, Miss Nevill, don’t look so shocked. I will rid you of him soon.”

“ I don’t understand. What has he done ? ”

“ Oh, various things, more or less dis-

graceful. I am going to remind him of a few to-night."

"Not here?" she said, nervously.

"No, not here. I am going to walk back with him part of the way, and I think you will find he has packed up his trunk and fled to-morrow or next day."

"But why didn't he know you?"

"He *did* know me; and that made him a little uncomfortable, as you have observed. He was in hopes I should not recognise him, as he had shaved his beard and changed his name; but I was too sharp for him. I am frightening you, I am afraid. There is nothing to make you nervous. I would not have told you now, only I thought you might like to look forward to being relieved from that—" he looked towards Sir John, and shrugged his shoulders.

"It would be a relief indeed," said Dorothea. "Does Nora know?"

"Nora knows nothing. Haven't you found out that a husband never tells his wife his secrets? No; the fact is, I have been writing to my friends in America, and making quite sure of facts, before I said a word to anybody. I am glad to say I have got all my answers just in time to prevent his coming forward at the election."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite," said the Irishman, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. "By the by, will you come and dine with us quite quietly to-morrow? Nora wants to have you for a chat."

"I should like to come very much," answered Dorothea, with just a touch of hesitation, wondering if she could run the chance of meeting Hugh; "but she was here this afternoon, and said nothing about it."

"I know. I met her as she was going

home, and she gave me a message for you to this effect. We may expect you then?"

He rose, for Sir John Hawker had at length made a move.

"As you are going, I will walk part of the way with you, Sir John," he said.

"Our roads lie in quite opposite directions, I am afraid," was the reply, in the blandest of tones.

"Then I will go your road," said Mr Fitzgerald imperturbably, and with great politeness stood aside to let Sir John pass out of the room first.

No sooner was he out of the house, however, than his manner changed.

"It is time there was an end to this farce, Mr Torrens," he said.

"Who are you speaking to?" said Sir John, striding along without turning his head, though he started visibly.

"Did you really believe I did not recog-

nise you?" said Fitzgerald, coolly. " You were mistaken if you did. Don't I remember certain transactions not far from 'Frisco, which were not over and above to your credit? I daresay you have forgotten them, as your memory appears to be short."

" How dare you insult me like this?" cried Sir John, in a voice of suppressed passion. " Do you know that I can have you up for libel? By——"

" You need not threaten or swear. I am not afraid. I heard from your wife to-day."

Sir John started again—this time more violently—and yelled out at the top of his voice, " My wife! You liar! You confounded——"

" I shall collar you, if you don't take care, and give you in charge to a policeman. There are plenty about here; so I would advise you to keep your complimentary remarks to yourself."

“What do you want?” said Sir John, cowed and sullen. “If you know so much, I suppose you know I was divorced from her; so she is no longer my wife.

“Oh yes, I know all that; and I suppose you told Miss Nevill all about it, or at least Sir Edward? Of course it could make no difference, as she is, as you say, ‘no longer your wife.’”

Sir John ground his teeth with rage.

“I suppose you intend to go and give Sir Edward the benefit of your d—d espionage?”

“Just so. I intend to do so to-morrow,” said Fitzgerald, coolly. “And I think, on the whole, you would find it more comfortable to have put a few miles between you and him before that happens. It is my impression that you will find Eastport rather too hot for you.”

“Do you suppose I am going to throw up my candidature to please you?”

“ Not in the least. Merely because I don’t think you will find it pay. There are a few other little matters I happen to be aware of, besides those domestic accidents I referred to ; and if you don’t take yourself off, I intend to pay the central office a visit, and we shall see if they will support you officially after that. Unfortunately our morality is a little strict still in England ; and we don’t much fancy a fortune made by sharp practice and stolen goods, to put it mildly.”

“ If I had a revolver I’d shoot you !” hissed Sir John, white with rage. “ We should soon see the end of all this swaggering.”

“ I daresay we should,” replied the Irishman. “ I do full justice to your powers of execution, which I witnessed once, as I have no doubt you remember — forget, I should say ; but I have letters from men who remember it.”

Sir John strode on in silence for a few

minutes. There was no loophole of escape; a precipice of shame yawned before him, and his avenger had forced him to the edge. He turned suddenly at last, and said, with dogged bitterness—

“ Well, what do you want with me ? ”

“ Merely your word that you leave this place to-morrow, and England within the week, and that you never set foot in this country again. You know I have all the proofs against you in my possession. I don’t want to publish them ; but you must bolt—that’s all.”

“ What on earth possessed me to come here ? ” muttered the wretched man.

“ What, indeed ? ” said Mr Fitzgerald. “ If you had chosen to keep yourself quiet, or even to flaunt your riches on the other side of the ocean, all this would never have happened.”

“ Look here,” said Sir John, in his voice

of dogged despair, “if I clear out of this, as you say, you need not go and publish all your beastly discoveries to the Eastporters, or to Sir Edward ?”

“ You have some sense of shame then, have you ? ” returned Fitzgerald. “ I shall make no promises. But if you get off to-morrow, maybe I shall only tell Sir Edward enough to make him comprehend your sudden flight. As to publicity, it is you that are fond of it, not I. I have no desire to see my name in print in connection with yours.”

There was a pause, during which Sir John’s hard breathing could be distinctly heard by his companion. At last he turned on him fiercely and said, “ What are you dogging me for ?—any more ? You have my word.”

“ If that is so, I will not trouble you with my company any longer. I shall have the honour of calling at your hotel to-morrow before the first up-train starts. You will be so

good as to leave instructions for your agent.” He raised his hat and was gone.

The next day the Eastport public were astonished to learn that the Conservative candidate had been suddenly and unexpectedly compelled to start for America, by urgent business matters, and that the field was left in undisputed possession of Mr James, the People’s Man—who was thus, much against his will, defrauded of the pleasure of a contest. He had been quite certain of victory, or of at least unseating Sir John Hawker afterwards on a charge of bribery, and he felt it hard not to be allowed the glory of winning his laurels. The Stupid Party were, however, once more covered with confusion, and that was some consolation.

There was a good deal of gossip, of course, on the occasion of Sir John’s sudden departure. Everybody had their own version of the story, and nobody’s tongue wagged more

malignantly than did Miss Harvey's. Also, Lady Katherine's fame did not entirely escape aspersion. But the true account of the transaction never transpired ; and when, by-and-by, the property which Sir John had bought was sold, and the big house finished and inhabited by a Manchester man, the American millionaire faded out of mind.

Sir Edward and Lady Katherine had their own reasons for saying as little as need be on the subject. There had been an explosion in the study at Admiralty House ; but Mr Fitzgerald had been as good as his word, even to the man he utterly despised.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

"Yet the sin is on us both : time to dance is not to woo ;
Wooing light makes fickle troth, scorn of *me* recoils on *you*."

IT was in the afternoon of the day on which Sir John Hawker took flight, when all Eastport was ringing with the strange news, that Hugh went to call, as he had promised, on Clara Wilson.

He could hardly believe that only a few months had passed since, light-hearted and thoughtless, he had been used to spring up the stone stairs that led to the Consular abode at Corfu. He felt so old, so grave, so preternaturally alive to all the possible consequences of the step he was now taking, that

Iphigenia preparing for the sacrifice would hardly have seemed to him an exaggerated type of his own sensations.

This news of Sir John Hawker's departure made matters almost worse ; for while it removed one barrier between himself and Dorothy, it made him realise all the more keenly that the only other remaining obstacle to his chance of happiness—one that it seemed impossible to overcome—was entirely of his own making.

As he entered Clara's house a young man brushed hastily past him, and he thought sadly, "She has visitors in plenty, no doubt. Couldn't she do without me?" He found her standing at the window of the sitting-room (redolent, of course, with the fumes of tobacco, though the Consul was not present) in an attitude of expectancy. She started and coloured as he came in, and asked if he had met her father.

“No,” he answered; “some one was coming out of the front door, who had just been to see you, I suppose.”

“Oh no!” she exclaimed, blushing vividly; “I daresay it was one of the tradespeople, or some one belonging to the other lodgers. There is a large family staying in this house;” and she proceeded to describe them in her lively foreign manner. But she failed to rouse Hugh’s interest by her clever picture—he wanted to come to business. It was very difficult to know how to begin, however, and she did not seem at all disposed to help him. Was she coquetting; or had she really become insensible to him, and ready to treat him as an ordinary acquaintance? At length he managed to give a somewhat violent twist to the conversation, and referred to the alteration that the last few weeks had made in his own feelings and opinions.

"And appearance too," said Clara, lightly. "I never saw any one so changed as you are. I think it is disappointing to find one's friends quite different from what one expected."

"So you are disappointed in me, Miss Wilson?" Hugh could hardly refrain from indulging in a smile under his moustache at her extraordinary directness.

"Oh, awfully!" (she had picked up this word since she had been at Eastport, and used it on every possible occasion)—"awfully! and I have no doubt you are with me, too. Confess now, isn't it mutual?"

He was so utterly taken aback by her vulgarity, that for a moment he could find no words. Then he said, more gravely than ever, that he had come there with the express purpose of arriving at a distinct understanding with her. He had gone over his own part of the scene many a time, and had taught

himself exactly what to say. With infinite courtesy he admitted how thoughtlessly and selfishly he had behaved at Corfu,—“though,” he added, “my conscience acquits me of anything approaching to intentional dishonour.”

“Dishonour!” cried Clara, rather shrilly; “oh dear, no! You were the very soul of honour. You never would write to me when papa forbade. I know some people who aren’t quite so scrupulous,” with a little shrug.

“There is one thing I am anxious about, particularly,” said Hugh, puzzled extremely by her manner, but determined to do his duty like a man, “and that is, a certain very foolish speech I made once to you about Miss Nevill and her cousin Drake. I daresay you forget it, but in case——”

“Oh dear, no!” interrupted Clara. “I remember it perfectly. I recollect everything about it. Have you forgotten what a glorious

afternoon it was ? Different from this," looking out of the window, and watching a scud of sleety rain driving across the Channel ; " perfectly calm and blue. Oh, and don't you remember those dirty old monks you abused, when every one else admired them ? Yes, to be sure ; Mr Drake had been telling me all about his relations here, and you pumped it all out of me afterwards. I should think it must have been a presentiment that made you take such an interest in them. And you made some arrangement about a flower with me, I think. What was it ? I forget that."

Hugh could not believe that her memory had so suddenly failed her in that one particular, but he said quite simply—

" I maintained that she would marry her cousin within six months ; and if not, I would return you the flower. The six months are passed, so I have brought it back."

“ Dear me ! ” cried Clara lightly, taking the little faded morsel gravely offered to her, and tossing it into the fire, “ how desperately solemnly you take everything ! You usen’t to be so terribly in earnest in old days. Can you never take a thing as a good joke now ? ”

“ Are you willing to look upon everything that passed between us as a good joke, Miss Wilson ? ”

“ No,” she said quite fiercely, with a sudden change of manner ; “ you know quite well that *you* did not mean it for a joke then, any more than I did. You can’t deny, that—that you offered me your love.”

Her eyes drooped, and, with a little flush on her cheek, she looked softer and prettier than she had done throughout that curious interview. Perhaps Hugh even then might have been touched, had not his mental

vision been filled by another figure, fairer, purer, of an utterly different type from that on which his bodily eyes were resting; as it was, Clara's rapid changes of mood served only to perplex and annoy him, and he waited silently for the next one. In a moment it came; the softer emotion, whatsoever might have been the cause of it, passed away, and in the hard light tone which she had assumed during most of the conversation, she said—

“ You couldn't do that now, could you? It is given away, I know, of course, to a much more worthy object; and what's more, I wouldn't take it now at a gift.”

Hugh started, and she laughed.

“ Ah! you are surprised. You think you *men* are at liberty to change as often as you please, but *we* are always to remain faithful. We must never console ourselves if we are deserted. *I* don't see that at all.

No, Mr Moore, you may make yourself perfectly happy, as far as I am concerned. I was very miserable, I confess, when you first left Corfu, but that is over long ago ; and now—well, I have got something better”—and the colour once more rose soft and lovely in her cheek. “ So go, and be happy—with Miss Nevill.”

She rose ; and so did he, with his hat in his hand, a feeling of bewilderment uppermost in his mind.

“ Is this my dismissal ? ” he said.

“ You don’t look as relieved as you ought,” said Clara, with a laugh of genuine merriment. “ You can’t make me out, can you ? Never mind. It will all come right, and you will understand better some day. You know my father leaves here next week. Say good-bye to Miss Nevill for me, in case I don’t see her again. She has been very kind to me. Perhaps you will bring her to

the South some day, and then you will come and see me."

" You must not couple my name with Miss Nevill's," said Hugh, hastily. " She has never given me the slightest reason to hope——"

" Oh no ! of course not," interrupted Clara, with a flash of her dark eyes. " *Cela va sans dire.* I was not so careful, was I ? Well, I must positively send you off, for I am awfully busy."

He took the hand she held out to him mechanically, and went down the stairs like a man in a dream. This much - dreaded interview had passed off so very differently to his expectations. Instead of leaving Miss Wilson pledged to a course he could only enter upon with feelings so absolutely distasteful he could hardly bear to face them, he quitted her a free man—his liberty more completely his own than it had been since

the days when he had first flirted with her at Corfu. And yet, strange to say, the preponderating feeling in his mind, as he turned away for a solitary walk across the heath, was one of desperate humiliation. He owed this priceless gift of freedom to the girl whom he had learnt to despise from the bottom of his heart—the girl who had thrown him over with contempt, who had given him nothing but biting words of scorn and sarcasm: she had rejected the sacrifice, over which he had struggled for weeks, without so much as a “Thank you,” before even he was sure she had understood what he was willing to offer her. It was something quite apart from the unworthiness he felt in Dorothea’s presence. He was just now experiencing the vast difference between humility and humiliation—one the product of love, the other of wounded self-esteem; but he was the better man for having drunk

that most disagreeable draught, and held it to his lips with his own hand.

Nora had been using all her powers of persuasion to induce her brother to come to dinner that night and meet Miss Nevill. Of course he flatly refused to do so. Be the result of his interview with Clara what it might—and he never divulged to his sister exactly what he meant to offer her—he felt he could not face Dorothea just then; nor would it be fair upon her, considering the way in which she had parted from him. He had made up his mind to avoid meeting her except in public, at any rate till he had been able to form an opinion of how she was regarding him. Any desire to defend her from Sir John Hawker's molestations was done away with now, by that gentleman's sudden departure. It was this last fact, however, that began by degrees to claim a certain amount of attention in his mind, and that

led him to end his walk by a visit to his sister—so timed as to be well in advance of her dinner-hour—in order to gather some information from her as to how the affair was regarded at Admiralty House. He could hardly believe that Miss Nevill's rejection of Sir John Hawker, which it appeared to Hugh had very possibly taken place, would really have necessitated such a complete abandonment of his position.

Nora met him with rather a blank face.

"Dorothy isn't coming to dinner after all," she said. "Little Frances has just been here to tell me her cousin is laid up with a frightful headache, and couldn't possibly come out. She thought it was something about Sir John Hawker, for Dorothy had told her not to mention his name to her. But it can't be because she cared for him. I must go and find out to-morrow what's the matter."

"It's just what I want to know about—

this flight of the Yankee," said Hugh, sitting down on the floor, while his small nephews proceeded to crawl over him.

"If you will get over your obstinacy, and stop to dinner, Willie will tell you perhaps more than he has told me. What the mystery is, I can't think; but I know just nothing about it, though I am certain that Willie does."

"A heavy tax to pay for your love of stirring other people's pies, eh, Nora?" said Hugh, looking up at his sister with a smile on his face, and an expression which she had missed for many a long day.

Instinctively divining the cause, she said, "What did Miss Clara say to you—or rather, what have you said to her? Something that settled her satisfactorily, I can see!"

"No; on the contrary, it is I who have been settled," said Hugh, in a constrained voice—"but I think we are quits." He

evidently did not wish to discuss the subject with her, and consented to stay to dinner, on condition she did not mention Miss Wilson again till he gave her leave.

The dinner was rather a silent one, for they were all somewhat preoccupied; and it was not till Nora had left the table, to go and pay her usual after-dinner visit to her sleeping babies, that Mr Fitzgerald explained to Hugh something of the real reason of Sir John Hawker's disappearance. Hugh was amazed at the accuracy and secrecy with which his brother-in-law had managed the affair, but he was quite prepared for the revelations made of the American's true character.

"I am afraid the whole thing has been rather a shock to poor Miss Nevill," added Mr Fitzgerald; "I tried to prepare her by giving her a hint before the *dénouement* took place. I don't think Sir Edward knew to

what extent that silly, worldly-minded little wife of his had allowed the Yankee's philanderings to proceed. It was an entire revelation to him to know how the poor girl had been persecuted. *I am not surprised that she was dreadfully upset, though I hope Sir Edward spared her the information about the other wife; but one can't tell.*"

Hugh listened in silence, meditating many things. Just as he was leaving, he took Nora aside, and said to her—

"I shall try my fate once more with Miss Nevill; and if she won't have anything to say to me, I shall write to Vivian and accept his offer at once. But you must promise me, Nora, not to say a word about me to her. I must manage my affairs my own way."

This stipulation, however, did not hinder Mrs Fitzgerald from walking down to Admiralty House next day after church (it was Sunday), and asking to see Dorothea. Lady

Katherine said she was very sorry, but her daughter was poorly, and had not left her room that morning. There was just a little stiffness in her manner; but Mrs Fitzgerald was the last person to be affected by it, for she was quite unconscious of how much her husband had had to do with the late disturbance, though he had told her a few of the facts.

“Do beg her to see me, Lady Katherine,” she cried; “I won’t do her any harm—indeed I won’t. You look tired and worried yourself.”

Frances, who had implicit faith in Mrs Fitzgerald’s powers of rousing any one out of a fit of depression, offered to run up-stairs and see if her cousin was able to receive her. Meanwhile Lady Katherine, mollified by Nora’s warm-hearted sympathy, descended from her high horse, and began to pour out her woes about Sir John Hawker, ignoring,

as much as she could, the fact that it was she herself who had been so willing to bring him forward, and had led the way in adopting him into society. By degrees Nora, who saw that her friend sorely felt the discomfort (to say the least of it) of her position, contrived to give a humorous turn to the events that had happened—for indeed there was a comical side to it all, which her Irish nature was not slow to see—and by the time she had persuaded Lady Katherine to be a little less lugubrious, Frances returned with a request from Dorothea that Nora would come up to her room.

She found her friend white-faced and miserable, lying on her sofa, and looking as if she had been crying her eyes out.

“ What blunders good people make ! ” thought the impulsive little Irishwoman, as she returned Dorothea’s greeting.

“ Your head is aching, my dear, I can see,”

she said, laying her cool fingers on the hot, throbbing brow.

“Yes, it has been aching ever since yesterday morning,” said Dorothea, in a voice that had all the spirit gone out of it.

“And what happened yesterday morning to make it ache?”

“Oh, don’t you know?” she said, covering her face with her hands; “haven’t you heard about Sir John Hawker?” Her voice sank into almost a whisper.

“Well, and what then? You surely are not sorry he has gone?”

“Sorry?” and she shuddered; “but to think of a man like that being about here! —having actually wanted to marry me! It makes me ready to die of shame!”—and she burst into a passion of tears.

“This is nonsense, Dorothy,” said Nora severely, for she felt that a sharp tonic was needed to restore the balance to overwrought

feelings. “*You* have nothing to be ashamed of. You never liked the man, and nobody knew anything about him before.”

“Did you know—did mother tell you—that his wife is still living?” said Dorothea, in a low, horror-struck voice.

“Yes, I heard,” was the answer; “but I am very sorry you did. I don’t the least see why you need have been told.”

“Father told me, but he said no one knew but Mr Fitzgerald. You don’t think all Eastport will find out?”

“Oh dear, no!” said Nora, cheerfully. “Eastport will very soon forget all about it. But one thing you *must* do—come out and show yourself at once, Dorothy. If you don’t want people to talk, the only thing is to seem perfectly indifferent. Now you are to come and walk back with me, and have lunch with me and Willie. We shall be perfectly alone—not even Hugh. Where is

your gown?—that pretty brown one with the jacket that fits you so well. That's right. Now your hat,—yes, I must allow you to wear a veil. Now a dose of sal-volatile, and you'll be quite well. The air will do you good. Come along ;” and the vigorous little woman dressed the unresisting Dorothea, brought her down-stairs—much to the astonishment of her mother—and walked her off, before she quite knew where she was. The headache did not vanish immediately, but the air of the common, and Nora's society, both did her good. Her self-respect had received a tremendous shock. The thought of the publicity with which Sir John Hawker's attentions had been displayed — the very idea that her mother at least had entertained the notion of her union with him—had haunted her every moment ; and nothing but such a determined proceeding as Nora's had been, would have shaken her out of her

morbid condition. Mrs Fitzgerald's brisk common-sense was a godsend to her just then.

Mr Fitzgerald was out when they reached the hotel; and as he was often uncertain as to his hour of eating lunch, they sat down without him. In a few minutes, however, he came in, hat in hand, and evidently considerably excited. He shook hands cordially with Dorothea, and then said quickly to his wife, "Here's a go, Nora! Who do you think is in trouble now? Poor old Wilson!"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked she, looking up astonished.

"Matter enough for him, poor old soul! though I should think it a good riddance. It seems Miss Clara has disappeared."

"Clara disappeared!" exclaimed both ladies in one breath.

"Yes. She did not come down at her usual time this morning, and he waited, thinking she was tired or poorly; but at

last he went up to her room, and found her flown,—some of her things packed, but not a line to tell him where she was gone, or anything about it.”

“ How extraordinary ! When did he see her last ? ”

“ Yesterday, about six o’clock. He was dining at the club, and naturally thought she had gone to bed, when he came home. So this morning he has been wandering over Eastport, in case she had taken it into her head to sleep at any of her friends’ houses. But of course she hadn’t ; and now he is distracted with terror, and at his wits’ end. Of course it’s an elopement ; but who with ? It can’t be Ward, I should think : there would have been no need to run off with him, for her father highly approved of the match. Besides, he went away last week, and was not coming back till next Wednesday. · He told me so himself.”

Dorothea had been silent, but her thoughts had flown to Hugh with the speed of lightning. In an instant a ghastly possibility had presented itself to her mind. Was the last remnant of her faith in him to be destroyed thus?

Mrs Fitzgerald, however, went on in perfect innocence — “I wonder if Hugh could throw any light on the subject? He was with her yesterday afternoon, I know.”

“Perhaps Wilson had some sort of an idea that he could,” returned her husband, “for I left the old chap on his way to Hugh’s lodgings.”

“To Hugh’s lodgings!” cried Nora. “What is the good of wasting the time by going there? Hugh has gone off for a huge long walk. He meant to lunch with the Vaudrays at Speanham—that old tutor of poor Ion’s, don’t you know? Hasn’t he been to

the railway station yet? Somebody probably has seen her there."

"Whew!" said Fitzgerald, taking up his hat again, and going towards the door. "Well, I must see him through this. Nora"—and he called his wife out into the passage—"I think you had better take Miss Nevill home as soon as you can, after lunch. It is not nice for her to be in the middle of all this. She has had enough bother lately."

"You don't mean that you have the faintest suspicion of Hugh, Willie?" she said, with a flash of indignation in her brown eyes.

"Not I, my little woman; but ten to one Wilson has, and I can't stand by and let a breath of suspicion fall on your brother. I wish he were not gone out of the place to-day. But at any rate, this sort of excitement can't be good for Miss Nevill. I shall be back soon. Good-bye."

Mr Fitzgerald found the Consul turning

away disconsolately from Hugh's lodgings with a very blank face.

"They were fond of one another, you know, at one time, and they have only just met again," he said. "I turned Moore away at Corfu, and perhaps he is taking his revenge like this."

Mr Fitzgerald was thankful he had not left the old Consul to his own devices after that speech. Just as likely as not, he would have gone straight to the General with a complaint lodged against his aide-de-camp; and before any one could have looked round, Hugh's name would have been the common talk of Eastport. When a man's daughter has disappeared under suspicious circumstances, he is not apt to stop to consider any one else's reputation.

"I think I can pledge my word as to my brother-in-law's honour," Fitzgerald replied. "I came after you with the hope of saving

time by stopping your going to his lodgings, for my wife has just told me he has gone over to lunch with some old friends at Speanham. I'll go with you to the railway station. That's your best chance of a clue. Ten to one your daughter has been recognised there."

The railway officials, however, knew nothing whatever about the young lady: there were only two trains by which she could have gone, and there was sufficient evidence from guards and porters that no such passenger had travelled by either of them. There now remained but one resource, and that was to see if she could be traced at the jetty, whence the steamers started for Southport and other towns along the coast.

In this investigation a faint glimmering of hope rewarded poor Mr Wilson, who was rapidly becoming quite frantic. A lady, answering fairly well to the description

given, had been seen by an official taking her ticket for Southport the previous evening in company with a gentleman, and they had both gone on board the steamer together. Mr Wilson was, of course, wild to follow on their traces, and was only withheld by the invincible fact that the only Sunday packet had departed an hour ago, and there would be no means of his getting off till the next morning. So the poor old Consul had to be pacified and consoled, as best might be, by the kind-hearted Irishman, who took him back to his lodgings, assuring him that there was nothing to do but to wait, and that he would probably have a letter or telegram before the day was over. It was poor consolation at the best; but Mr Wilson saw the force of Fitzgerald's reasoning, that it would be as well to be on the spot in case any communications arrived—and so he consoled himself,

as best he could, with many pipes, while the long afternoon wore away, bitterly regretting that he had ever been weak enough to listen to his daughter's persuasions and leave Corfu. He probably fell asleep over these mournful reflections, for it was quite dark, and his pipe was out, when some one knocked at the door of his room and brought in a letter.

Hastily calling for a light, he tore it open, and read as follows :—

“ DEAR OLD FATHER,—I daresay you were rather surprised not to see me this morning. I fancy I shall rather astonish you by what I am going to tell you. You know how you left Venice all of a sudden. I suppose you were frightened about Giovanni. Well, he never rested till he had traced me to Eastport. Wasn’t it clever of him? He used to wait about, after he got there, till he saw

you were out of the house, and then come and see me. At least he did that twice. The second time was on Saturday afternoon. Well, would you believe it ? he actually made me promise to run away with him. I was frightened at first; but he loves me so dearly, and I love him so, that at last I said I would. I packed up my things in the little box, and he came and fetched me after you had gone to the club ; and off we went.

“ We were married to-day. He managed it all so beautifully, and I am so happy. We are just going to start for the Mediterranean, in a big steamer—ever so much nicer than Mr Ward’s little yacht. By the by, when you see Mr Ward, if he comes back before you leave Eastport, do tell him I hope he will find somebody nice to marry him, and I am sorry I was nasty to him. It was all Giovanni’s fault — and Giovanni is such a darling ! I will write to you when I get to

Venice. I suppose you will be back in Corfu by that time. Perhaps we will come and see you there some day.—Your affectionate daughter,

CLARA LEGA."

Enclosed was a short note from her husband, in Italian, full of superlatives, imploring pardon from a father he felt he had justly incensed, and pleading his intense love for the daughter as his only excuse. He at least left no doubt in Mr Wilson's mind that the marriage had been properly solemnised, and gave all the necessary information, should the Consul desire to trace it out for himself.

These letters were almost as much of a surprise as a relief to the anxious father. His heart was sore and wounded at the way Clara had treated him, and at the extremely cool tone of her letter.

"I never knew how to manage her," he said plaintively to Mr Fitzgerald, who had

come in to see how he was getting on, and if there were any tidings of Clara ; “ but I never refused her anything but once ; and now in my old age she deserts me like this. I would have let her marry Giovanni to-morrow, if she had told me she wanted to do it. I came here to please her, and this is the end of it.”

“ At any rate, you will acquit my brother-in - law of any complicity in this arrangement,” said Fitzgerald, with a smile, as he was leaving the room.

But Mr Wilson shook his head. He was firmly convinced that Clara had intended to marry Hugh, and that he must therefore be indirectly the cause of the calamity. Probably Moore had quarrelled with his daughter, and thus driven her to this desperate action. He did not realise, poor old man, that for once in her life Clara’s motives, however impulsive, were at least free from all stain of worldliness,—that she was deliberately giving

up comparative wealth, a title, and a position upon which she had long set her heart, for a life of obscurity, and a probable struggle with poverty, on the shores of the Adriatic. She was far too wide-awake to have allowed pique alone to be her incentive in this matter. It was love pure and simple, and love responded to in a way which her instinct told her had never been the case with Hugh—never even before she made the discovery that his heart was given to another. So, for Giovanni's sake, she sacrificed cheerfully her dearest projects and her proudest conquests.

In the midst of her new-found happiness she did not, however, entirely forget Mr Moore.

When he came in from his long walk late in the evening, the firelight revealed two white patches on the table of his sitting-room. One was a card, with the Commander of the flag-ship's name on it; the

other a letter in Clara's well-known handwriting.

Not having heard a word of the news that had thrown Eastport into such commotion, he was utterly amazed when he perused the contents.

The young bride went rather more into details than she had done with her father,—explained how Giovanni had left the house on the previous day just as Hugh entered it, and how alarmed she was lest Mr Wilson should have seen him; said he no doubt understood now why it was she had changed her tone and told him he need trouble himself no more about her; and finally, assured him that she had never been so happy in her life, or known what it was to love—that she bore him no malice whatever, and only hoped to hear he was happily married before long.

Hugh carried this extraordinary epistle to

his sister as soon as he had swallowed the contents himself, and soon became acquainted with all that had happened in his absence ; and how, finally, poor old Wilson had just been to the hotel to bid Mr Fitzgerald farewell —saying he should leave Eastport by the first train next day, only begging his friend as a great favour to spare him the pain of informing Mr Ward of what had taken place. This was more than Mr Fitzgerald had at all bargained for, naturally ; and he sat before his writing-table in such helpless perplexity, that Nora at last took pity on her husband (who, like most men, was rather deficient in moral courage of a certain sort), and despatched to her old friend the kindest, tenderest note imaginable, breaking the hard news to him as gently as possible, and softening down Clara's cruel message till it sounded almost amiable.

No doubt it was a heavy blow to poor

Jack Ward, whose sorely tried constancy deserved a better reward. But before the year was over, Nora received a letter from him from Australia, announcing his marriage with a fair Scotch lassie whom he had met at Sydney, and who promised to make him a far better wife than the little Corfu Clara could ever have done.

Hugh made up his mind to go and see the Consul off next morning. He was really sorry for the poor old man, whose affection for his daughter had always been his strongest point, as Hugh himself had had special occasion to know. Indeed it was the recollection of how that same paternal affection had stood him in good stead, when he was on the edge of a catastrophe, that made Hugh anxious to shake hands once more with Mr Wilson, and part on friendly terms. He found the Consul looking very grey and shaken; but he was touched by Hugh's

friendliness in coming to look after him, and was entirely convinced of the soldier's innocence with regard to his daughter's elopement, when he heard the account of their final interview.

"Good-bye, good-bye, Mr Moore," he said, shaking him warmly by the hand as the train moved out of the station. "You little thought, six months ago, that I should be congratulating you on *not* being my son-in-law!"

CHAPTER XIX.

“ Yours is the faith and the truth that abide always ; yours henceforward shall be the perfect union of souls.”

AND now at last the coast was clear, and the issues were simple.

It was merely this—Dorothea or Armenia ? And the answer lay with Miss Nevill.

Yet Hugh hesitated. All through the Monday he hesitated, trembling lest the final touch should only dash his hopes to the ground even more fatally. He knew this was the end of all things one way or another, and for that very reason shrank from putting his fate to the touch ; but he was absolutely miserable, kept out of his sister’s way, and could not even make up

his mind to return Captain Newman's visit. On Tuesday morning he came to the conclusion that uncertainty was intolerable, and that he had better know the worst and have done with it. So he summoned up all his courage, and formally asked Sir Edward's leave to speak to Dorothea. The result of that interview was on the whole satisfactory. Sir Edward had always held a good opinion of Mr Moore, and was well aware also of the high estimation entertained for him by his General. The young man's straightforwardness and humility pleased him, for Hugh made a clean breast of all that had passed; and above all, if ever there was an auspicious moment for a suitor's appeal, this was the occasion.

Both Sir Edward and Lady Katherine were quick to see that the wheel of fortune was giving an advantageous twist in their direction. A certain amount of stigma could

not fail to be attached to them in connection with this uncomfortable episode of Sir John Hawker: their consciences were all the more alive to the fact because they never acknowledged it. What could be more felicitous than that a fresh lover should step in just at this juncture—and a lover whose connections were irreproachable, even if his prospects, so far as regarded worldly wealth, were not all that could be desired?

The end of it all was, that Hugh found himself at liberty, nay invited, to call at Admiralty House that same afternoon, and try his fortune once more with Dorothea Nevill—the only stipulation being, that no one should give her the slightest hint of the impending interview, but that he should have the benefit of her free and unbiassed decision. Whether to be hopeful or not as to the result of that final asking, he did not know. He could not think Dorothea was

likely to have changed her mind : the remembrance was vivid still of her face and gesture as she said the bitter words, "Mr Moore, I am disappointed in you." Was he more worthy of her trust now than he had been two months ago ?

It was a lovely May day, and the dock-yard was fragrant with the odour of spring flowers, which took advantage of every corner and sunny boder to shake themselves out in the sweet sunshine. All the little houses in the yard had their windows full of mignonette and gillyflowers ; there was a feeling of spring in the air ; the green-sward in front of Admiralty House was white with the petals of cherry - blossom, shaken down by the passing breeze. Hugh stood still for a moment, gazing at it all, before he turned up the steps and rang the bell. There are times in one's life when the veil seems to be lifted, and outward

things have a mysterious meaning — when in the depths of our heart we feel the echo of nature's voice calling us to rejoice in the beauty and to share in the gladness. Hugh could not have put his thoughts into words ; he was vaguely conscious that a spring day had never felt quite like this to him before. He wondered how that quiet little cemetery was looking, over at Cannes. He wondered whether he should ever feel as lonely again as he did the last time he stood there, a few days ago ; and then—he thought of his love. Would all this look as beautiful to him in a few minutes' time, when he might be turning away from the door-step, having said good-bye to her for ever ? Was it the last time that the sun would shine for him, the sky be blue, the birds sing ? He dared not face the other alternative, and with a sigh turned on his heel, and went slowly up the broad stone steps.

He asked for Lady Katherine, and was shown at once into the drawing-room. His eye took in everything as he entered the familiar room: the wealth of flowers everywhere, the window open on to the lawn, the lace curtain swayed gently to and fro by the wind, the fireplace filled with a fragrant orange azalea—it was too warm to want a fire till evening—the pretty quaint furniture,—all just as he had seen it last, two months ago. He noticed, too, that Lady Katherine was alone: his glance instinctively sought for another tall stately figure, but it was not there. Lady Katherine greeted him with the utmost kindness, and entered into a little conversation about his sister and his parents, in order to put him at ease, and then presently added with a smile, “But I know you have not come to see me, Mr Moore; we had our little talk this morning. Dorothea is practising in the ball-room. You know

your way there through those doors, don't you? I may just tell you, perhaps, that my best wishes go with you? I shall see you again by-and-by ; " and with the most gracious of smiles her ladyship left the room. Hugh little guessed what amount of extra friendliness was accorded to him in consequence of that grave in the Cannes cemetery. He was deeply sensible of her goodwill, and of the ready tact which made his way so easy.

The beauty of that same lovely May day had also found its way to Dorothea's heart. She had been sitting at the piano waiting for Frances to come and join her to practise some duets ; but through the open windows all the beauty of spring air and sunshine seemed to be enticing her to come out and enjoy it, and she rose and walked out into the garden. There was a soft, velvety green lawn in front of the windows, and on one

side a long green walk under some trees, leading to the walled kitchen-garden, where Dorothea and Frances had some choice plants of their own, which they had brought from abroad, and which they had been carefully watching during the last few days, as the warmth had brought out the tender little green shoots. As she walked down the path, she was singing to herself—singing with a feeling of light-heartedness to which she had been a stranger for some time past: some vague oppression had been removed from her spirits; things were not so utterly wrong as they had seemed to her, only a few days ago. There was a note from Nora Fitzgerald in her pocket at that moment, which gave her a little thrill of pleasure whenever she read it; there was something in it that made her feel sure she would have the opportunity for which she was longing so ardently—some chance of telling Hugh

Moore how she had misjudged him, of relieving her conscience of the accusation which had lain heavy upon it, and with a daily increasing weight, ever since that wet ride in the woods last winter. It *was* winter then, though it seemed to be spring ; now spring was really here, and the make-believes were over.

She stopped a moment to push back a branch of lilac which hung over the path : it smelt so sweet that she broke off a little bunch, and as she did so, began to sing again the refrain of the old German song which had been ringing in her head all day :—

“Nur musst du mich auch recht versteh’n,
Ja recht versteh’n ;
Wenn Menschen auseinander geh’n,
So sagen sie : Auf Wiederseh’n—auf Wiederseh’n !”

A movement in the path behind her made her look quickly. There stood Hugh Moore. He had discovered that the ball-room was

empty and the window open, and had guessed that he would find her in the garden. The sound of her song, soft though it was, soon showed him where she was, and now he stood facing her. For one moment their eyes met—one delicious moment—and then conventionalities flashed upon both of them simultaneously, and Dorothea held out her hand : how did she know this was not an ordinary visit on the return of a friend from abroad ? But Hugh had very different ideas in his mind. That glance of her eyes, the warm colour flushing in her cheek, made his heart give a leap.

“ I am afraid I startled you,” he said ; “ but I could not help listening to that song. Lady Katherine said I might come and find you.” He stooped to pick up the piece of lilac which she had dropped as she shook hands with him ; and as he gave it her, he tried to look into her eyes again,

but they were obstinately fixed on the ground.

“Thank you,” she said, and no other words would come. She stood quite still; the colour had left her face, and Hugh was not slow to mark the look of suffering that he had never seen there before. It was he who broke the silence once more.

“I’ve not forgotten that song, Miss Nevill. Do you remember singing it on board the flag-ship one evening?”

“I gave you a regular German lesson, I think, didn’t I?” answered she, lifting her eyes for a moment, with a faint smile. She was beginning to feel a little more natural, and only hoped he would not discover her confusion. “How could she be so silly?” she said to herself.

“You were very kind to me in those days,” he said, with a thrill in his voice; “and afterwards I think you were kinder still,

though it did not seem so at the time. Would it tire you to hear a long story? I think you ought to know it, for the sake of others besides myself."

There was the upturned keel of an old boat that the sailors had converted into a sort of garden-seat for the young ladies in this their own little secluded bower. Dorothea led the way towards it, and sat down, while Hugh leant against a tree just in front of her. Then he told her quite simply all the story of his acquaintance with Clara Wilson. He did not spare himself in the recital. He told what a struggle it had been between his own idea of honour and that of other people. "And then, when I knew you, Miss Nevill," he went on, "and you would have nothing to say to me, I thought I had never known what honour meant before—or love either. You were perfectly right, and I richly deserved it

all; but it nearly broke my heart. Then came those two months at Cannes. I don't think I can ever say what that time was to me;" and he paused a moment to steady his voice. Dorothea was listening with bent head and averted face. "But it was there that I made up my mind to do what I ought to have done long before, and what I knew you would have told me was right: I determined to come to a complete understanding with Miss Wilson, and abide by whatever she required of me. I went to see her directly I came back, and found—well, you can imagine the scorn with which a man ought to be treated when he has played fast and loose with any one. It made me feel that she had had the best of it all through, and I had thrown away my happiness for absolutely nothing. But there was nothing more for me to do. I was dismissed, and of course the sequel has proved that she had

cause enough. You know what happened the next day ; and now, Miss Nevill, I have almost come to the end of my long story. Thank you for being so patient. I have only one thing to ask you. Can you forgive me for the pain and annoyance I caused you ? I would give all that I possess to regain your friendship before I go away for good.”

“ Go away ? ” cried Dorothea, in a voice that was full of pain and bewilderment.

“ Yes. I have been offered a semi-diplomatic post in Armenia, and if I accept it I must leave here at once. It’s as good an opening as I can expect to have, and I have nothing to keep me in England now. Won’t you say you forgive me, and that we part friends ? ”

Dorothea had covered her face with her hands : those words of Hugh Moore’s had cut her to the heart. What was she, that she

should presume to think of forgiveness towards a man whom she had misjudged from beginning to end? He waited for her answer, however, quite calmly, bending down towards her, restraining by a strong effort his own emotion, which the sight of hers stirred so powerfully.

"Mr Moore, it is all wrong. I—I have nothing to forgive," she said at last; the tears were dropping through her fingers. "I have been wanting so to ask you to forgive me the way I treated you. I had no right to judge you; but I didn't understand, and I was taken by surprise. I had always thought you and Miss Wilson——"

"I know, I know," he said eagerly, interrupting her. "Don't think I blame you for one moment. You thought every one was as noble as yourself; that was all your mistake."

But she motioned him back, and rose to

her feet. “No, Mr Moore. Let me tell you all. It will make me happier, for I have had it on my mind for a long time—and a false accusation weighs like lead, you know. I did not know Miss Wilson then. When she came here, I saw a good deal of her, and it grew quite clear how it had all been. I saw how she treated Mr Ward. I did not know a woman could be like that, and I had blamed *you* for it all, and thought you were caring for her still. It was I who was unjust—unkind—unwomanly. Can you forgive me?” She raised her eyes, all dim with tears, to his face.

Then he could restrain himself no longer; he caught both her hands—“Dorothy, Dorothy, is it so?” and drew her towards him. She did not repulse him this time. His strong arms were round her waist, and her head was resting on his shoulder.

Over their heads, in the tender spring

foliage, the birds were telling their love-stories to one another; on the grass below, these two had found each other at last.

Five-o'clock tea was going on in the drawing-room. Sir Edward had been holding a committee in his study on an elaborate system of signalling, which he was anxious to introduce into the navy; and after the consultation had gone on for nearly two hours, the Admiral, glad to make a diversion, as his own pet scheme was getting knocked about more than he approved of, proposed an adjournment, and led the way into the drawing-room,—

“Where my ladies will be delighted to see you,” said he. “They highly approve of committees over their teacups, I assure you. Come in, my dear Newman,” taking him by the arm, as he was holding back; “you haven’t been to see us for ever so long. We were only thinking this morning what a

stranger you had become. Holloa, Fan ! so you are tea-maker to-day, are you ? Where's your aunt ? ”

“ Oh, she's coming directly, Uncle Edward. You know I'm far better at the tea operations than either she or Dorothy. They always forget who takes sugar and who doesn't. Come, Charlie, you must help me dispose of these cups.”

The Flag-lieutenant had only just risen to his legs as the party came in. He had been sitting on the floor playing with his dogs, quite as anxious to know the result of the confabulation in the garden as were his aunt and sister. Indeed they had all been on tenter-hooks for the last hour, ever since Lady Katherine had stopped Frances as she was flying down to practise with Dorothea, and had taken her instead into her own sitting-room and told her the state of things. Of course Fan guessed easily enough what

would be the result of Hugh's second proposal ; but she kept her promise to Dorothea, and controlled her excitement as best she could. Having said she was "not at home," Lady Katherine was a good deal surprised when, later in the afternoon, voices and footsteps warned her that the drawing-room was about to be invaded. Signing to Frances, therefore, to take her place at the tea-table and cover her escape, she made her way quickly into the ball-room by a side door, feeling that before all things it was essential to spare Dorothea the ordeal of stumbling inadvertently upon a roomful of company. She augured well from the length of time which the interview had lasted, and she had not long to wait before her anticipations were realised. Quite unconscious that the afternoon had flown past, Hugh and Dorothea came slowly across the green shady lawn ; and Lady Katherine, long before she could see their faces, knew that

Hugh had won his prize. For the moment her mother's heart overflowed as she stood and watched them. Presently they looked up, and seeing her waiting for them at the open window, quickened their step and came towards the house.

What cruel fate was it that made Captain Newman raise his eyes at that particular moment and look out into the garden? He was standing rather apart from the others, with his cup in his hand, talking to another officer. Of course he guessed it all before—knew what must happen directly the way was made clear, as he thought had been the case by the departure of Sir John Hawker; and yet, when his eyes actually saw that pair walking together across the greensward, he felt that his hopes had received a death-blow. His face, however, betrayed no emotion; he stopped exactly where he was, and listened to what the other was saying, gave his answer

clearly and decidedly, and then moved towards the tea-table.

“Miss Drake,” he said, “will you make my excuses to Lady Katherine? I find I must not wait for her to come in, as I have an engagement on board my ship.” And giving the same plea to the Admiral, who tried in vain to detain him, he let himself out.

When Lady Katherine joined the party in the drawing-room, one glance at her face was quite sufficient for those who knew what was going on. It was as well for the Commander that he had escaped when he did.

Yes, his fate was sealed. He had waited—and lost. Lost what? His heart’s desire, or his honour? At any rate, there was no need for him to stay any longer at Eastport. He had made up his mind to go weeks before, and hardly knew why he put off from day to day applying for an exchange. That night

he wrote up to the Admiralty, and asked to be appointed to the command of a small ship on the Australian station which had just become vacant. He was a good officer, and had interest at headquarters ; and in a few days the appointment came down, with orders to start for his new command almost immediately.

Miss Nevill's engagement was naturally an inexhaustible topic of conversation for the Eastport world,—so much so, in fact, that the change of command on board the flagship attracted but slight attention. At any other time, speculations would have been rife concerning the probable or improbable successor round every tea-table in the place. Captain Newman paid his farewell calls, as in duty bound, and heard at every house some fresh version of how Hugh Moore and Dorothea Nevill had come together. Fortunately for him, the ordeal was short, and

he was very full of business. He could not have gone through all he had to do, had he once given the reins to his imagination ; but he felt he was living in a sort of dream —afraid to wake himself up to full consciousness till he should have left Eastport, and all it contained, far behind him.

The very afternoon before he left, he walked up to Admiralty House. He had purposely left it to the last, feeling that Dorothea's good-bye was the one thing he should carry away with him, and that the recollection of having seen her face to face once more, might help to compensate by-and-by for the present pain. After all, he had nerved himself for nothing. Lady Katherine was at home, and Frances Drake ; Miss Nevill had gone out riding with Hugh. Visitors were coming and going, and the Commander found himself the object of many regrets, for people were really sorry

to part with him, now the time was come : it seemed just to have dawned upon them that they were losing a stanch and valued friend. Frances was in high spirits, but in the midst of her triumph she did not entirely forget the way in which Captain Newman had helped her when she was in trouble on a certain occasion. With all her wildness, she had a sympathetic nature, and there was something in his face that struck her that afternoon—a certain drawn, set expression, to which she was not accustomed ; and a want of spontaneity also in his congratulations, as if every word were an effort. It flashed across her, that perhaps this leave-taking was more to him than they had any idea of—a tearing up of old roots, and breaking off associations that were dear to him. Anyhow, *he* should not go away without seeing Dorothea again, if he cared to do so, and she told him her cousin was sure to be at home

by six o'clock ; or if he preferred it, in the evening. There were people coming to dinner, but that would not signify. Her cousin would be really vexed if she did not say good-bye to him. " You are such an old friend, Captain Newman," she added, almost wistfully ; " we shall never find anybody else quite the same."

He chose the latter of the two appointments, saying he would look in on his way to the station, and could only, therefore, stay a moment.

True to her instinct, Captain Newman's unexpected ally was on the look-out for him that evening. The ladies had just returned to the drawing-room after dinner, when she heard his voice in the hall, and hastening to the door, she met him.

" Won't you wait out here ? " she said ; " there are such a lot of old dowagers in the drawing-room, and each of them will button-

hole you in turn. I'll tell Dolly, and she will come out and see you in a moment."

"Thank you, Miss Drake ;" and there was something in Captain Newman's tone which almost brought the tears to her eyes, as she turned quickly back into the drawing-room. In a minute or two Dorothea came towards him, out into that hall where they had so often sat together between the dances—where she had first confided to him her dislike and dread of Sir John Hawker—where, on the very same evening, he had seen the introduction take place between her and Hugh Moore.

She was all in white this evening, with a lovely colour on her cheeks, and her eyes clear, and shining with happiness.

"How good of you to come and say good-bye to me !" she said, motioning him to a sofa—the same which they had both occupied that night. But he would not trust

himself to sit down, and said he had only a minute to spare before catching his train.

“I am sorry you are going so far away,” she said softly, looking up into his face with so much regret in her blue eyes that he could not answer for a moment. “But we must meet again before so very long,” she continued. “You will not be in Australia more than three years, will you? And time passes so quickly.”

“Very quickly when you are happy,” he said.

“And you will be happy?” she answered, half questioningly. “It was your own wish to go, wasn’t it?”

“Oh yes,” he answered; but his voice was husky, and he turned his face away.

“I wish Hugh were here to-night; but perhaps he will see you at the station. He told me he had spoken to you yesterday, but only for a minute. He wants to see you again, I

know." Then, after a moment's hesitation, she added, blushing, "We shall not forget you, Captain Newman, by-and-by—there is so much to remember you for. You have been my friend—and—and you won't forget us?"

The tears were standing in her eyes as he looked into them for the last time. There was a strange smile on his lips as he said, slowly and quietly—

"No, I won't forget."

Did she guess nothing? he wondered. Well, she should never know—never.

"I must be going," he said at last, holding out his hand. "I have never wished you joy, but you knew it before. And thank you for all your kindness to me: I can never forget that."

"Good-bye then, Captain Newman. I think the gratitude is all on my side." She put her hand into his, and added, shyly, "I hope some day I may be able to congratulate you."

Her long, firm fingers were in his clasp, and he held them tightly for a moment, while a wave of passionate longing swept over him to tell her something of the pain she was inflicting—something of the love which he had kept locked up in his heart all these months. Never know? Why should she *not* know? Why should he *not* say—“Oh, Dorothy, how I have loved you!—how I have loved you! It is agony to part from you. I have never told you—never even asked you to pity me—never stepped between you and the man you loved. Nay, I helped him—kept others from you because of him; and he never guessed what it cost me—for his sake—for your sake. Marry! Never! I am too old to care for any one else now. I have given my heart to you, and I cannot take it back. At least give me your pity. Say you thank me for *this*.”

The passionate words were almost uttered,

the self-imposed barriers almost broken down, when the flash of a ring on her left hand recalled him to himself. She was Hugh's now. What matter that he loved her so? Only this, that he must leave her, and that instantly. He dropped her hand suddenly. It all happened in a moment, but she could not help noticing some of the rapid changes of expression that had swept over his face. Something, surely, must have reached her of the unuttered love, regret, and longing that he was so sternly repressing?

But the struggle was over—the lifelong habit of self-control had stood him in good stead in his hour of need. His lips were sealed—the victory won.

“Thank you, Miss Nevill,” he said at last, in a low voice. “Good-bye—and—God bless you.”

He opened the door for her to re-enter the drawing-room with his usual quiet courtesy.

She hesitated a moment, and then passed in before him with bent head and tremulous smile. “Auf wiederseh’n,” she whispered, and he closed the door after her—for the last time.

Yes; it was over, and he felt dazed and stupefied. The pain was so great, it seemed to benumb him. As in a dream, he walked down the steps and out into the still moonlight night—a dream that was only a too vivid reality—a dream with two figures in it, Dorothea and Hugh. The only distinct idea he had in his mind with reference to himself was, that somehow he had saved her pain. He had taken the suffering and given her the joy. Some day—by means of the present agony—the purer peace might come to him,—the peace that springs from sacrifice. He was hardly thinking of himself at all just then. He had lived for her so long, that he had not begun to realise what it would be to

have a distinct and separate existence. Only over and over again he caught himself repeating the words which had so often been his safeguard : “ She shall never know—never know—never, never.”

“ Measure thy life by loss, and not by gain—
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth ;
For love’s strength standeth in love’s sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most, hath most to give.”

THE END.

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